



PUBLISHED BY JAMES GEMMELL, EDINBURGH.

LONDON,	-	-	-	HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
GLASGOW,	-	-	-	D. DRYE & SON.
ABERDEEN,	-	-	-	A. & R. MILNE.
BELFAST,	-	-	-	A. F. TAIT, Bridge Street; and THE COLPORTAGE SOCIETY, Lombard St.

THE DOMINION AND GLORY

THE REDEEMER

THE

SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE OF THE CHURCH,

THE JOY OF THE SAINTS.

BY

THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.

EDINBURGH:

JAMES GEMMELL, 15 GEORGE IV. BRIDGE.

1880.

P R E F A C E .

THE Discourses contained in this volume have been selected, with some care, out of the numerous manuscripts that have been accumulating during a lengthened ministry of more than fifty-two years. There are others—expository, doctrinal, and practical—which, had the author consulted his own taste, or the expressed feelings of numbers who heard them, he might have preferred to publish ; but these have been deliberately taken on account of the great importance and permanent interest of the subjects, and because there is evidence that they have been of spiritual benefit to some in life and death. The chief aim in delivering these Discourses was to display the Saviour in the transcendent glory of His person, character, and work, as Immanuel, God with us—Prophet, Priest, and King of the covenant ; and to exhibit Him as the Foundation and Head cornerstone of the church—the Alpha and Omega of His people's praise, and hopes and joys. While some of the subjects are more directly connected with the subjective condition of believers—their labours, trials, conflicts, and deliverances in life and death—the source of all-sufficient support and comfort and victory is uniformly traced to Him who was given for a covenant of the people—the Mighty One on whom was laid the help of the saved from all everlasting.

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Earnestly desiring himself to know Christ as “ All and

in all," and profoundly thankful for the mercy and grace extended to him in arduous, though imperfect public services, he commits Discourses which were made to some extent useful, to the press, in the humble hope that, when thus reproduced and more widely circulated, the great end of their publication may be secured,—so that when the living voice that spoke them shall be silent in the grave, they may bring a revenue of glory to the enthroned Redeemer, and may minister peace and joy in believing to His saints.

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THE SWELLINGS OF JORDAN.

PREPARATION NEEDED FOR SPECIAL WORK AND TROUBLES.

JEREMIAH xii. 5—“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

THESE words of gracious and solemn expostulation are the Lord's answer to the prayer of His servant Jeremiah, when, under personal troubles, he carried his case to the throne of mercy, and sought Divine help and deliverance. Perplexed about the prosperous state of his wicked persecutors, he ascribes righteousness to His Maker; but puzzled at the obscurity and apparent inequality of providential dispensations—as the best of God's servants in all ages have been—he bewails his personal calamities, and expostulates with Jehovah concerning the condition of the enemies and oppressors of His people. In “the spirit of adoption” and holy boldness in prayer, he reasons the case with God; and at the same time he clings to the sheet-anchor of faith—justifying God in His ways—even before he can clearly scan the grounds of His sovereign procedure. With child-like confidence he declares his own case of trial, pours out his heart, and resigns himself wholly to the Divine disposal; and as he forcibly depicts the calamities that are about to come upon the land, caused by the abounding wickedness of its inhabitants, he imprecates vengeance upon them, and remits them to the judgments which their manifold transgressions had provoked.

The Divine answer to the prophet's prayer, as recorded in the 5th and 6th verses, gently but forcibly reproves the

impatience of His servant, calls him to consider particularly the state of his own temper and spirit, and warns him of the need of special preparation for greater trials approaching than any which he had yet encountered. Condescending to hear and give an answer of peace to his fervent petitions, He yet detects and brings to light the corruptions that had mingled with his service. He would have him neither to magnify present afflictions, nor to sink despairingly under them. The opposition of the men of his native city, He forewarns him, is not so formidable as that which he might expect from the princes of Judah. The present calamities of the nation are not to be compared with approaching desolations. If Jeremiah was now so discouraged and faint-hearted, how would he bear severer troubles? If his spirit succumbed at the sight of the prosperity of wicked men, and of the rising judgments which national sins had provoked, how would he be prepared to act as a faithful witness against evil doers when their sins were increased, and their crimes against society were multiplied? How could he stand when the impetuous flood of vengeance would overflow, sweeping away before it all opposing barriers?

The solemn language of the text—at first uttered in reference to a servant of God in a case of perplexity and trial, and in an era of threatening judgments—may be regarded as the Lord's message, loudly spoken to all hearers of the Gospel. All enjoy now a day of merciful visitation. All are called to a work and service which God has enjoined them to do, and are either accepted or rejected and punished, as they perform it faithfully, or as they neglect it. None of God's servants are exempted from trials. While they should bear those that are laid upon them with patience, and duly improve them, they should prepare for others coming, particularly for the last trial, which may be more solemn and severe than any that preceded it. It deeply concerns us to inspect frequently and closely our frame of spirit in seasons of trial, and as we emerge out

of them; and to consider our preparation to meet those which are allotted to us in the future. Above all, it behoves us to reflect that we have individually to meet with death, and to stand in the judgment. In those aspects, the two-fold inquiry of the text is to every one awfully solemn and momentous. All are responsible for earnestly considering it, as all should be prepared to give an answer for himself to Him who puts it.

We notice briefly—

I. THE CASE PROPOSED.

Besides the public trials that befel the prophet in the exercise of his ministry in dark and troublous times, he found “a man’s foes to be those of his own house.” His brethren, the house of his father, dealt treacherously with him, and seem to have urged on avowed enemies to do him injury. “*They called a multitude after him.*” It was especially grievous to him to be hated by his kindred. This prompted the bitter complaint of his spirit, as he carried his case to God in prayer; and this occasioned the Divine expostulation in answer to the prophet’s prayer, “If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou contend with horses?” Applying these figurative expressions to the state of many who hear the Gospel, and especially to the condition of believers under diversified afflictions, we observe that—

Trials in life are various, and from them none are exempted.

Trouble is the fruit of the curse, and is a part of the lot of the whole human race, and of every individual, considered as fallen and sinful. “Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” (Job v. 6, 7.) “Man is of few days, and full of trouble.” With the whole race under the curse of the broken covenant, God deals as with a nation of condemned criminals. Though it is said of the wicked, “they are not in trouble as other men,” and “they have no bands in”

their death," this only applies to a particular class, and the exemption from trial is but partial and for a limited time. The lot even of the righteous, rescued from the Fall and redeemed from the curse, is a lot of trial and suffering. "Many are their afflictions." The Saviour forewarns them that for them while here there is no exemption. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." (John xvi. 33.) "Through much tribulation" we "must inherit the kingdom." Whatever our present condition, it behoves us to calculate on and expect affliction, and at all times to make preparation for its coming.

Afflictive trials often spring from quarters and arise in ways that we could not anticipate. It was from those from whom he might have expected sympathy and friendship that the prophet experienced "treacherous dealing." It was in "the land of peace, wherein he trusted," that he was "wearied." So our greatest trials come often unexpected, and our severest afflictions find us unprepared. Since the Fall, man is doomed to disappointment in all his expectations. Eve named her first-born *Cain*, acquisition, and hailed him as a gift from the Lord; and yet, in his character and the dark crime with which his name is associated, he proved a curse to the family instead of a blessing. Job said, in the day of his prosperity, when the candle of the Lord shined on his head, "I shall die in my nest," not being aware of the days of sad adversity that would intervene before his allotted course was finished. The royal Psalmist said, "I shall never be moved;" and, in the conscious enjoyment of God's favour, he boasted that his "mountain stood strong." But when the Lord hid his face, he was "troubled." Such is the lot of humanity; and to the saints as well as to others, in a world of vicissitude and trial, afflictions in various forms come when they are least looked for. Enough that to them they are under the disposal of infinite wisdom, to which nothing is fortuitous, and that they are sent in sovereign love, to work the most gracious and beneficial results. We need ever to

be reminded that "*they build too low who build beneath the skies.*" Our earthly gourds speedily wither; and days of pleasure and gladness are succeeded by nights of sorrow and weeping. The clouds, however bright at times, speedily "return after rain." "Vanity and vexation of spirit" are inscribed on all earthly enjoyments if they are sought without Christ, and are separated from man's chief end. Besides a lot of common afflictions, the children of God are exposed to temptations, potent and diversified, from the powers of darkness. We tread on no ground where we are free from the onsets of the tempter. Whether, as a cunning *serpent*, he seeks to decoive and seduce, or as a *dragon* or *roaring lion* he attacks to devour, we have to meet "the fiery darts" of the wicked one, shot forth suddenly, and, when they wound, full of deadly poison. Satan tries the believer on his weak side—which he generally knows—for the purpose of destruction. God, on the other hand, tries him in a tender part, so as to make him feel the disciplinary chastisement as "not joyous but grievous" when it is inflicted, yet yielding afterward "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

There are *important and diversified duties required of the servants of God, however tried.* The grand end of our existence is to glorify God, as we would enjoy Him here and hereafter. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 30.) Talents are entrusted to us with the individual charge, "Occupy till I come." (Luke xix. 13.) In coming to Christ to obtain rest, we are required to take upon us His yoke, and to wear it always, in ready and devoted service. We must at one time "run with the footmen," and at another "contend with horses." This implies activity and progress—a race to be run that we may obtain; a conflict and warfare to be finished that we may achieve the victory and share its reward. We owe duties to God, to ourselves, and to fellow-men. "This is the work of God, that ye may believe in His Son whom He hath sent." We are

commanded to "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life." (John vi. 27.) We are enjoined to "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and to press forward in the "narrow way." We are bid to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," as if all depended on our own exertion; and yet, while working, and after we have done all, to lay no stress upon our works, nor claim for them the least merit. "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.) To fellow-men we owe the manifold duties of forbearance and sympathy, of love and ready help. These duties, of whatever kind, are to be performed in their proper season. While constantly "abounding"—labouring to excel ourselves and others "in the work of the Lord," we are "to do good to all men as we have opportunity." The opportunity constitutes an obligation. To all men we owe love from a pure heart: and we are debtors for whatever service they require and our abilities are adequate to render.

The righteous, like a tree planted by the divisions of water, brings forth fruit "in his season." (Ps. i. 3.) Times of youth—periods of manly vigour—seasons of trial—and even of infirm old age, have all their appropriate duties, which may not be neglected, and the performance of which will yield pleasant and profitable fruit. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." (Ps. xcii. 13, 14.)

In the way of duty itself we are prone to become *weary, impatient, and unhappy*. The experience of Jeremiah, when he was wearied in running with the footmen, and when he succumbed under annoyances "in the land of peace," has been common to the best of God's servants. Under accumulated trials, Job cursed the day of his birth. From the pressure of diversified trouble, Jacob exclaimed—"All these things are against me." Elijah, disappointed in the expectation of a national return to God, and oppressed with unbelieving fears, entreated that he "might

die and not live." Of Israel, when under miraculous guidance, and fed with "bread of heaven," it is said—"The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." (Num. xxi. 4.) From the power of temptation, the strength of inward corruption, and external opposition and difficulties, all Zion's travellers are in danger of yielding to unworthy fears, or of sinking dispirited under discouragement. Hence they are directed to "consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest they be wearied and faint in their minds." (Heb. xii. 3.) Even in light trials, as in the contest with "footmen," we are prone to be wearied. The Divine rebuke implies that this is always wrong. We are never at liberty to be fretful and impatient. Patience must have her perfect work; and trials are sent for the purpose of testing and strengthening it. It is the spirit of unbelief to say, when trials are continued and increased, and hope is deferred—"Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (2 Kings vi. 32.) Israel's sin was "*murmuring*," as it was the ground of their frequent chastisement. We, too, are prone to manifest the same spirit, when disappointed in our expectations, and visited with afflictions of larger or shorter continuance—of greater or less severity. This wearying and repining under chastisement is always wrong—manifesting unbelief and rebellion against God, unfitting for enduring greater trials, and provoking the Divine displeasure. Our duty is to "rejoice evermore." Our privilege is to "glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience the hope that maketh not ashamed." (Rom. v. 3, 4.)

This *weariness in duty and forsaking it* arises in many cases from the spiritual state being *unchanged*. This is the grand reason why men become tired of religion, or give over and forsake the way of duty. They have not "the root of the matter in them." Their hearts were never truly inclined to God's ways, and they had no spiritual apprehension of Divine things, nor true relish

for the blessings of salvation. Hence they "trust in the land of peace," instead of confiding wholly in God's mercy and salvation. They presume on the continuance of life and health, and cherish hopes unsubstantial and delusive. From such a state of spirit nothing but weariness and fainting are to be expected. Trials of whatever kind—coming from the Divine hand—are designed to benefit us, and to minister to us the fruit of righteousness. We are rebuked and chastened for our profit, that we may become "partakers of God's holiness." Mercies, warnings, trials only harden the more, if they are unheeded and misimproved. The fig tree that remains barren, after repeated sparing and means of improvement, is at length cut down, and cast out as a "cumberer of the ground." The earth that, after much cultivation, only "bears briars and thorns, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned." Let us be assured that God will test us and try us; and let us constantly fear lest, by wearying, repining, or apostacy, we give evidence of the nature being unchanged; and we remain under the curse, to be doomed to final rejection and misery.

II. THE SOLEMN INQUIRY.

The two-fold expostulation—"How will ye contend with horses?" "What will ye do in the swellings of Jordan?" implies that those to whom it is addressed will be called to greater efforts, and that their strength will be unavailing against powerful enemies and overwhelming calamities. If they proved so weak when it was only "footmen" with whom they had to run, how would they be able to compete in the race with horses? If they were wearied and exhausted "in the land of peace," how would they stand in the overflowing flood, and buffet the impetuous waves of the Jordan?

These earnest inquiries are designed to convey to us the most weighty and important instruction:

First—*If less trials are not duly improved we may expect greater.* This is a rule of the Divine procedure, both in relation to saints and sinners. God has many rods in His hand, and He employs them as He sees fit for correction and punishment. A period of long-suffering forbearance is frequently succeeded by a time of avenging justice. God makes a “full end of the nations” that oppress His people, while He spares them in the greatness of his tender mercy and compassion. Mercies slighted and trials unimproved tend the more to harden, and thus to prepare for wrathful visitations. “I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.” “He that being often reproveth, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.” (Isa. lvii. 17; Prov. xxix. 1.) It is a sure sign of vengeance and destruction approaching, either upon individuals or nations, when warnings pass unheeded, when opportunities and privileges are not improved, and when afflictions produce no sanctified results.

Secondly—*Special preparation is required for approaching trials.* In the land of peace we should expect war and confusion; when running with footmen, we should prepare for the contest with horses. We are constantly liable to reverses in our condition, and our prosperous state may be speedily turned into misery. Health may fail, our friends change, or be removed by death. “Riches make to themselves wings and fly away.” Gourds of earthly comfort are nipped and perish in a night. Trials accumulate and gather from various quarters. “Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” Admonished of coming changes and troubles, we should seek always to have our lights burning, and our loins girded. We should “prepare to meet God,” and should wait for Him in the way of His judgments. A day of opportunity is given us for this purpose. It is likened to a *seed time*; and we are impressively taught that the *harvest* will follow the sowing, and will resemble it in nature and quality. “What a man soweth, the same

shall he also reap." "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 8.) "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow." (Isa. xvii. 10, 11.) It behoves us to have the anchor prepared before the tempest rises, if we would weather the storm, or reach the haven in safety. We should enter the ark before the deluge comes. Our house must be founded on a rock, if it would stand when the winds and waves beat upon it, and we are to escape the impending destruction. We must seek *actual preparation* for a day of trial and conflict. We must take to ourselves, and put on the whole panoply of God, that we may be able to stand in the day of evil. Our great duty is to draw strength from the Fountain of might, that we may be equipped for the battle. We are to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." (Ps. xxviii. 24.) Seasons that are unimproved do not return. Opportunities neglected not only pass away for ever, but they entail fearful retribution. Evils, that by due consideration might have been escaped, accumulate, till they become overwhelming. In bitter and unavailing regret, the slothful and negligent are compelled to exclaim: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. viii. 20.)

Thirdly—The inquiry may be regarded as *chiefly having respect to the dying scene*. The figurative allusion to greater troubles is taken from what is known about some Eastern rivers. From the snow melting, and the heavy rain-falls in mountainous regions, they are increased in volume and overflow their ordinary channels. Jordan—at all times,

as its name imports, rapid running—when swollen by the dissolving of the snows on Lebanon, spreads widely over the adjacent country. Thus was it when Israel, under the leadership of Joshua, entered the land of promise. The river was in full flood at the time Israel was to pass over. It had overflowed all its banks; and only by a miracle of power could the people enter their covenanted inheritance, in the view of hosts of opposing enemies. When an obstacle which no created power could remove interposed between them and the desired possession, and they were made fully sensible of their own weakness, then the Lord wrought for them glorious deliverance. When the ark of the covenant—the chosen symbol of the Divine presence and power—was borne to the margin of the flood, and the priests' feet dipped in the waters, then Jordan was "driven back," and Israel entered Canaan triumphant, as on dry ground.

As Jordan was the limit of the desert-wandering, and separated the wilderness from the land of promise, so the inquiry in the text may be regarded as pointing to a dying hour, and an entrance into the eternal world. Let us notice briefly some of the difficulties and terrors of the scene that would seem to demand special preparation—that require that we should know what to do amid the swellings of Jordan.

The Old Lion is there. The sweeping destruction caused by the Babylonish invader is once and again likened to the lion roused from his lair by a sudden inundation. "He shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong." (Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44.) Satan, the great adversary, is frequently compared to a lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour—to a lion "lurking and ravening for his prey." Under the broken covenant he has "the power of death" (Heb. ii. 14), viewed as a penal infliction. He is the executioner of Divine wrath against the ungodly. The wicked, in death, are "driven away in their wickedness;" and Satan,

"their greatest enemy," is given "to stand at their right hand." Devils seize the disembodied soul to carry it to the prison of endless woe. Even the saints at times, as they approach the death-scene, have to encounter the assaults of the destroyer. Power is permitted him to bruise "the heel" of the covenant-seed, and to put them in fear, though he cannot touch their life, and his own head is effectually bruised. It concerns us all to ask what they will do in this conflict with Apollyon? If you have been in his service, and been led away by his temptations, what will you do when he comes to take the prey? How fearful is it to be fully given over to the tormentors! Even if we have been redeemed from the enemy's hand, we need to prepare for the conflict "with the rulers of the darkness of this world," and to take "the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. vi. 13.)

Troubles in death are at times manifold and complicated. At the parting scene they gather from various quarters. The waters overflow, and appear to interpose between the saints and the fulfilment of the promise. Health is gone, and affliction and pains seize on the body. The removal of tried friends has taken away those who sustained and comforted us. Outward circumstances are changed, and betimes the pressure of penury aggravates other sufferings. Distress of mind and anguish of spirit intensify the outward trouble. The sufferer knows not whither to turn for relief. Clouds and darkness surround him. The floods have gone over his soul. He has come into deep waters, where there is no standing. When brought into such a condition, it behoves us to inquire what we will do. Who can assuage the swollen billows? If, in the land of peace, before affliction came, we were wearied, how will we bear up when diversified troubles assail? If light afflictions were so little improved, and the rebellious spirit knew so little comfort, what will we do in a season of distress and sorrow? "What will ye do in the day of visitation and in

the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and to whom will ye leave your glory?" (Isa. x. 3.) The river of death is at times swollen and impetuous more than ordinary, when the passage is to be made. The Christian pilgrim found the waters "cold and rapid withal;" and once and again his head sank beneath the stream. The thought that thus it may be in our case, when we are called to go over, should lead us to solemn preparation. We should see to be able even now to declare what we shall do in the swellings of Jordan.

Strength fails, and opportunities are reckoned for and reversed. The period of death is one of weakness and decay. Flesh and heart faint and fail. "The strong men bow themselves, and the grasshopper becomes a burden." The vigour of the body is gone—the powers of the mind are impaired—the strength of the whole man is enfeebled. Thus reduced to helpless infirmity, how can you bear up? If caught in a tempest, what will you do for a refuge, when, even were one discovered, there is no strength to run into it for shelter? If we fall down under the flood, we will be overwhelmed for ever. "Can thine heart endure, or thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." (Ezek. xxii. 1-4.) Opportunities neglected and misimproved are not only removed, but incur fearful retribution. The summer past, and the harvest ended, salvation is unattainable for ever. Sabbaths, ministers, Gospel offers and warnings are removed, no longer to be enjoyed. Their misimprovement involves their forfeiture. The talent unoccupied is taken from the slothful servant. "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. xxv. 29.) The barren fig tree is cut down as a cumberer of the ground, and given up as fuel for the burning. When the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, what will those do who are left without? All the strength of man, and of angels is unavailing to reopen it. "Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Preparation for death and meetness for heaven are indispensable. The sting of death remains when sin is unpurged. The unrenowned and the unclean cannot enter the heavenly kingdom. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Moral purity—the fruit of the Saviour's grace—will alone uphold in the swellings of Jordan. This will be a defence from the power of the roaring lion. In "the way of holiness," in which the redeemed walk, "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon." (Isa. xxxv. 9.) With sin unpardoned, and corruption unsubdued, none can tell what to do when death comes. But in union to Christ—clothed with His righteousness, and with the Spirit's graces in exercise—death is divested of its terrors. "They that were ready" go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. The Saviour receives to Himself the servants that wait for Him; admission to the joys of their Lord is ample compensation for all the trials and sorrows of their earthly pilgrimage.

The "*swellings of Jordan*" must be passed by every one either for final happiness or for everlasting destruction. Death intervenes between us and the world of spirits. "It is appointed to all men once to die." We cannot drive back the stream, and arrest the onward current; and there is no circuitous way by which we can enter the land of promise, without coming in contact with the dark waters. The river that separates time from eternity will not stay its course till a single traveller of all the vast multitude has passed through. Our lot for eternity is irrevocably fixed at "the swellings of Jordan." As we enter, it is either to go to the heavenly Canaan, or to be swept down—a wreck on the shores of a lost eternity. With such solemn prospects before you, what will you do, when but a step is between you and death? O sinners!—thoughtless, polluted rebels!—what will you do when God arises to judgment—when He will set your "iniquities before Him—your secret sins in the light of His countenance"? (Psa. xc. 8.)

III. PLAIN DIRECTIONS IN REPLY TO THE INQUIRY.

It is useless to reiterate these questions and leave them unanswered. It were unfeeling and cruel to bring persons in view of the stronger conflict, and of the swellings of Jordan, and there leave them without hope. There are not a few, it is to be feared, who are in this sad condition. They are either careless and indifferent, or apprehend no danger; or, if it is in any measure perceived, they are unacquainted with the effectual means of escape. They trifle and delay till they are surrounded with the swollen billows, and then destruction is inevitable. The subject demands the most serious thought. When we suggest how you may successfully "contend with horses," and how you may safely pass through the waves of Jordan, it deeply concerns you to lay these counsels to heart, and to reduce them to practice, as you would escape impending ruin, and secure an entrance into the land of promise.

1. In the land of peace, *choose your Leader, and resolutely follow Him.* There is only One who is given as a "Leader and Commander;" "a witness of the people." The "Captain of Salvation" was made "perfect through sufferings," that He might "bring many sons to glory." He is the Lord of life—the "Lord mighty to save." Already He has fought the battle with all the enemies of His people, and achieved for them the victory. His is an arm of power, and His right hand is exalted. "All power in heaven and earth" is given Him for His people's salvation. He is the Conqueror of Death, and the Lord of the invisible world. He has the keys of hell and of death. We should, above all, take Christ Jesus for our Leader. When, as Jephthah addressed the people assembled at Mizpah, He demands of us—"Shall I be your Head?" we should willingly enlist under His banner, and by faith surrender ourselves wholly to His leading. "Thine are we, and on Thy side," O Son of God." It is *now*, with present mercies and opportunities, that, embracing Him as our Leader and

Saviour, we should surrender ourselves to Him. This implies a pledge given to forsake other masters, to fight under His standard, and to follow Him whithersoever He goes,—to victory or defeat, in life or in death. Whatsoever others do, we pledge to Him devoted adherence. His authoritative direction is, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." (John xxi. 22.) In all duty, through every trial, in the hardest conflict, and when we enter the swollen river of death, our grand and only business is to follow this skilful, gracious, powerful Leader. We should swear perpetual fealty to Him, be identified with His people, and seek Him in all Divine ordinances. Thus will we contend successfully "with horses." The Leader of the Lord's host will fight for us the battle and achieve the victory. He will conduct us in safety to the swellings of Jordan, and go before us as we pass through them. To the generations following we are to declare with joyful lips, "This God is our God, for ever and ever. He will be our God to death, and above and beyond it."*

Perform all *present duty faithfully*. We are not our own. "Bought with a price," we are the servants of the heavenly King; and we are called to glorify Him with our bodies and spirits, which are his. If we come to the Redeemer for *rest*, we must take upon us His yoke, and obey from the heart all His commandments. We are sent forth by the Lord to work in His vineyard. Every part of His service, even the most trying and difficult, is honourable; as "the recompense of the reward" at present and for the future is great and glorious. "Him that serveth me, him will my Father honour." "And where I am, there will also my servant be." (John xii. 26.) Talents and opportunities are entrusted to us for improvement. Our Master's money is given us to occupy till He comes to require the final account. Our chief concern is to be faithful to the

* The original expression is peculiar, implying not only guidance as far as to death, but above and over it.

important trust, and to give all diligence to be "found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." Admission to the joy of the Lord is only for that servant who was active and faithful. "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.)

We should *improve present trials*. "In the day of adversity" we are called to "consider." The great duty of the afflicted is prayer. Afflictions are sent for the trial of faith and other graces. Our duty as well as our privilege is to rejoice in tribulation—not for itself, but on account of the gracious fruits and effects. Sanctified afflictions "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." They "work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope that maketh not ashamed." In a twofold way, afflictions are evidenced to be the discipline of the covenant, and chastisement blessed by the Spirit. They humble us for sins, and bring us nearer to Christ. Thus are we weaned from the world, taught to keep God's law, and we become conformed to Him who was made perfect through sufferings. We are led wholly to trust Him who suffered, being tempted, that He might sympathise with and succour them who are tempted. Present trials are thus unstinged, and when greater come, they are felt to be but "light and momentary." Looking at the things that are unseen and eternal, they "work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

It behoves us *to die daily*. The Apostle referred to his own peculiar persecutions, and his exposure to deaths oft, when he said—"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." (1 Cor. xv. 31.) We, too, should learn this most important lesson. In the season of active labour and vigorous health, we should prepare for death. We should learn to "die daily," by doing our life-work with our might, and in the constant view of Christ's coming. We should settle our accounts for eternity daily. In the exercise of all holy graces, we should commit our spirits to God, and wait for the appear-

ance of the Lord. It is required that we be "ambitious to be accepted of Him."* (2 Cor. v. 9.) We should set our house in order, and wait for God's salvation. Frequently reminded that "here we have no continuing city," we should "seek one to come, whose Builder and Maker is God." It concerns us to have our title to the heavenly state cleared up, and to have the meotness for its full enjoyment. In the vigorous exercise of the Spirit's graces, we should cherish the "desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better," than to be employed in the highest service here, or to enjoy the most exalted privilege on earth. We should so "give diligence" to ascertain our calling and election, and to grow in grace, that "an entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 12.)

Lastly—We should hear the word of our Leader, and fix *our eye and heart on the true Ark of the Covenant when we actually come to the swellings of Jordan*. When Israel was to pass over the river that separated the wilderness from the promised land, Joshua, by Divine direction, addressed to them repeated commands. The ark of the covenant was to be borne aloft on the shoulders of the priests. A space was left between it and the people, that they might be duly impressed with reverence for the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and that they might distinctly see it. So soon as the feet of the priests who bore the ark touched the waters, Jordan was rolled back, and Israel passed through as on dry ground. This memorable scene displays the people's ready obedience, and the way provided for their safety and triumph. So, too, when we come to trials and to death, what is chiefly required of us is child-like, unreserved obedience to the Master's command. We need never fear to go where He leads. He who prescribes the duty will give strength for its performance, accept of our

* Such is the import of the original term.

obedience, and crown it with His blessing. The ark was the token and pledge of God's covenant of peace—the designed type of Him who is given “a covenant for the people.” In approaching the swellings of Jordan—whether the heavier troubles of life or the river of death—our grand concern should be to have our eye and heart fixed on the covenant of redemption, and on Him who is the Mediator and dispenser of all its blessings. Other objects—ministers, the dearest earthly friends—either leave us, or, if present, they cannot effectually bear us through the last trouble. In that solemn moment it is only the living God, “the Lord of all the earth,” that can bear us up, and carry us through in safety. When He fulfils His promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” we can want no good thing. Omniscience is present to guide, an Omnipotent arm is sufficient to sustain, infinite love and mercy surround and come up upon the reward. All Israel's safety, amidst difficulty and threatened danger, was to follow the ark, and to look to the priests bearing it, as they stood at the margin of the waters. At the presence of Israel's God, Jordan was driven back; and in glorious triumph, by a way most unexpected, the ransomed of the Lord passed out of the wilderness into the land of promise. Thus, too, shall we escape from the last trials of earth, and enter the heavenly Canaan. Without fear or dismay, or hesitation, in calmness and patience, committing our spirits to the God of truth, our redeeming Head, we may go into the waves of trouble and enter the river of death. The God of Salvation is ever mindful of His covenant. His animating command and assurance are, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.” His gracious, powerful presence is sufficient to uphold in the greatest weakness and trial, and to lead to glorious deliverance and triumph. His word of promise shall assuredly be fulfilled: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee” to uphold and deliver. Support in present trouble is the pledge and

earnest of future deliverance and completed victory. "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites and the Hittites." The event and issue of all trials and deliverances will be that Jesus, the Captain and Leader of the host, will be magnified in the eyes of the redeemed. As Joshua was magnified before all the people when the Jordan was dried up, and they were conducted safely to the land of promise, so Christ, the Lord, will have all the glory of the saints' leading, deliverance, and salvation. To Him pertains, of proper right, the loud acclaim of all their praise—"Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." (Exod. xv. 5; see ver. 13, 17.)

IN CONCLUSION—

This subject solemnly *addresses all to whom the message is sent*. It admonishes of *present duty*, and declares the only way of *future safety*. We beseech you to consider and lay to heart these weighty inquiries, and the way by which you may aright prepare for trials, and escape threatened danger. Accept the counsel of a friend now,—of one who must himself contend in the conflict, and must ere long enter "the swellings of Jordan." Some have, in the time of health and peace, contemned the offer of the Gospel, and undervalued prayers, which they afterwards eagerly desired in the time of affliction, and in the prospect of death. As you would "stand in the evil day," put on the whole "armour of righteousness." As you would not willingly undergo the horrors of a shipwreck, or be borne down the stream to the gulf of despair, look and cleave to Him who has conquered death, and who has undertaken to lead in "a way that is right" to "the city of habitation."

2. It speaks *direction* and *strong consolation* to the saints. Through the grace of the covenant, the righteous will

hold on their way, and will run "the race set before them." In the conflict with strong and numerous foes, the Captain of Salvation will go before them, uphold them with the power of His right hand, and achieve for them a sure and certain victory. The swellings of Jordan have been already passed through in safety by the forerunner, Israel's Leader and Death's Conqueror, and by a great host of ransomed ones. If you follow Him, you will not be an exception. He will guide you even to death, and *above* and *beyond* it. (Ps. xlviii. 14.) The ark of the covenant of the God of all the earth will divide the swollen river, and open for you a safe passage. The feet of the High Priest of our profession will stand in the waters till all the redeemed have passed over. None that were given to Christ—none that fully commit themselves to Him—can ever perish. In a way that is right, fulfilling all His promises, and taking all the glory to Himself, He will conduct them through difficulties, vanquish for them all enemies, and bring them to his rest in glory. Their triumphant song of praise will at length be, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." (1 Cor. xv. 57; Ps. lxvi. 12.)

THE
PLEASURE OF THE LORD PROSPERING
IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS.

ISAIAH liii. 10—"And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in
His hands."

THE grand subject of the remarkable prophecy contained in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is Christ Jesus as a suffering Saviour, and the salvation effected through His atoning death. In the preceding verses the prophet, guided by the Spirit of inspiration, had spoken at length of the Saviour's lowly abasement, of His spotless innocence, of the vicarious nature of His sufferings and death, and of the Father's vindication of His character, and approval and acceptance of His work. At this tenth verse commence predictions concerning the exaltation, glory, and triumph of the Messiah. These are singularly pregnant in meaning, and fraught with strong consolation to believers in Christ, when they are conscious of the strength of corruption in their own hearts, and concerned about the power and long-continuance of evil in the world.

In the despite cast upon the suffering Saviour, and in the embittered afflictions which He was called to endure, it is declared that "it pleased the Father to bruise Him," or, as it may be rendered, "He was pleased with His Bruised One." The sufferer was God's own Son—His "Fellow" and "elect Servant." The sufferings which He endured were inflicted by Jehovah's hand. He was pleased *with* Him as the Surety provided—His sent and sealed One. He was well pleased *in* Him, as, by His obedience unto death, He fulfilled His will, satisfied Divine justice, and propitiated His wrath against sinners. The sufferings of the Saviour, by whatever instruments inflicted,

came from the hand of Jehovah; they were of Divine appointment and agency. His sacrifice was moreover to God a "sweet smelling savour." When the work of the Surety was finished, the Divine complacency was signally displayed. When "His soul shall make an offering for sin, He shall see His seed."^{*} He was, in the fullest sense, a voluntary victim for human transgression. With all His heart He yielded up His precious life. His whole human nature, His living self, was laid upon the altar of Divine justice, to procure pardon and salvation for perishing sinners. Then the blessed fruits are declared—"He shall see His seed." There shall be a great spiritual progeny of ransomed sinners. A numerous posterity—as dew-drops from the womb of the morning, beautiful and refreshing—will grow up under His eye. He shall see them with joy, as a loving father beholds with delight a prosperous family—reflecting His likeness, and perpetuating his name with honour to coming generations. "He shall prolong His days." His mediatorial life shall be lengthened. When He dies, He shall live again, by the power of God, to intercede continually, to reign over all, and to save by His life all that are reconciled by His blood. Then, it is emphatically declared in the text—as characteristic of the whole work of the Redeemer in the purchase and application of human redemption, and as furnishing the strongest ground of confidence and hope to the heirs of salvation—"The pleasure of Jehovah in His hand shall prosper." May we see and admire the Saviour's glory, behold by faith Jehovah's pleasure accomplished by His hand, and contemplate it prospering throughout the world, and to the end of time, till the whole earth shall have been filled with His glory!

We speak—

I. OF THIS PLEASURE OF THE LORD.

The opening phrase—"The pleasure of Jehovah"—is

* So the original words may properly be rendered.

singularly expressive. It denotes that which is accordant with His holy nature—the purpose of His sovereign will—that wherein He has rest and satisfaction, infinite complacency and delight. So full of meaning and comprehensive is the expression, that we can only select for illustration a few views of Jehovah's good pleasure. Ought we not, on entering upon a theme so lofty, to seek that the Holy Spirit, whose office is to glorify Christ, would enable us to conceive and utter aright thoughts suitable to this great subject? Should we not fervently pray that He would enlighten and direct our minds to understand aright the deep things of God, and dispose our hearts joyfully to rest in the assurance that all Jehovah's pleasure shall prosper in the hands of the Elder Brother?

The pleasure of the Lord is *His purpose of grace and mercy toward mankind from eternity*. In the Divine foreknowledge, man was viewed as fallen, estranged from God, and lying under His dreadful wrath and curse. In awful justice, He might have consigned the whole guilty race to merited punishment, and doomed them to interminable misery and ruin. Instead of this, in infinite love and compassion, He entertained for lost sinners thoughts of peace and designs of mercy. In the counsels of eternity a Divine determination was framed, that a way of escape should be opened for the guilty and perishing. This is unfolded under a variety of expressive designations in the Scriptures—Jehovah's "eternal purpose of grace," "The good pleasure of His will," of "His goodness," that which "He purposed in Himself." This eternal purpose is sovereign and most gracious. The angels that kept not their first estate were passed by, and no Saviour or salvation provided for them. For fallen man there was opened, through God's wisdom and love, "a door of hope." The throne of Divine sovereignty was the seat of astonishing mercy; and upon the ruins of man's fall has been erected a glorious superstructure, the headstone of which was to be brought forth with loud hosannas of "Grace, grace unto it."

To advance His own glory and the well-being of creation, the wondrous plan of mercy was formed from eternity in the counsels of Godhead. The eternal Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, rejoiced "in the habitable parts of the earth; and His delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.)

The pleasure of the Lord, is, again, *His glory in the covenant of redemption*. This was the blessed plan for accomplishing the end of God's gracious purpose, and ensuring the glorious results. The high design was that mercy should be "built up to endure for ever," and for this end the covenant of peace was framed. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." (Ps. lxxxix. 2, 3, 4.) This covenant of rich grace—the counsel of peace—was framed from eternity among the persons of the blessed Godhead. A Mediator was appointed and a Surety provided. Mutual stipulations were entered into, and the wondrous transaction was ratified by the oath of the Eternal. Thus, by "two immutable things"—the word and the oath of Jehovah—was provided "strong consolation for them that flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." (Heb. vi. 18.) In virtue of the covenant-engagement, the obedience and sufferings of the Redeemer obtain a glorious reward. Sinners redeemed by Christ are reconciled to God, stand in the most endeared relation to Him, and are ultimately brought home to glory. A Divine righteousness has been brought in and made available for all believers. The Spirit is freely given them, and all are theirs, as they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Cor. iii. 22.) The covenant—"ordered in all things and sure"—contains nothing but blessing for the heirs of salvation. As ratified by the blood of the Testator, it becomes a testamentary deed to those who are represented in it—the objects of Divine love from eternity. All Jehovah's dealings towards them are in covenant-love and tender mercy.

His throne is encircled with a "rainbow in sight like an emerald." The dispensations which proceed from it are in "mercy and truth going before His face." This is evidently Jehovah's eternal good pleasure—that in which His glory is brightly manifested. Delighting in the covenant-relation, He declares, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." (Heb. viii. 10.) "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Isa. liv. 10.) All things in grace and providence—all things in life and death, in time and eternity, that relate to the safety and salvation of the redeemed—are in the covenant, ordered in infinite wisdom, and the administration entrusted to the Mediator, and therefore the pleasure of the Lord must ever prosper in His hand.

The *conversion and salvation* of the redeemed are the peculiar pleasure of Jehovah, prospering in the Redeemer's hand. This is carrying into effect the purpose of love entertained from eternity—this is the application of the redemption provided. Jehovah has done whatever pleased Him, in creating and ordering the material universe. "For thy pleasure they are and were created." The movements of Providence are the development of the Divine decree. "He doeth according to His will in the hosts of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." A ransomed church on earth is the highest manifestation to our world of Jehovah's glory. The Gospel preached throughout the nations is the message of Divine benevolence to a guilty and rebellious race. While it ascribes "glory to God in the highest," it proclaims "peace on earth, good will to men." (Luko ii. 14.) The word, when it comes with power, displays Divine sovereignty. To some it proves "the savour of life unto life," while to others it is "the savour of death unto death." One sinner converted by the instrumentality of the word is a greater moral wonder than the material world created. With a voice from the ex-

cellent glory, the eternal Father declared of the Saviour, when in lowly abasement, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jehovah is still well pleased in the work of bringing near His salvation, and with every sinner that flees to Him for refuge from the wrath to come. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." The "Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake" with all that take shelter under the covert of blood, and that "through hope betake themselves to His mercy." A "willing people come to Him in the day of His power," appearing in "the beauties of holiness," from "the womb of the morning," with the attractive "dew of their youth." God has "pleasure in His saints." Their prayers and praises are His delight; their spiritual sacrifices are to Him a sweet-smelling savour. He loves His servants' peace. Zion is His chosen rest. He dwells among His people. His glory is great in their salvation. This is pre-eminently His work in the earth, by which He accomplishes His wise and holy purposes. "The Lord hath made known His salvation. His righteousness hath He openly showed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." (Ps. xcvi. 2, 3.)

Jehovah's *dispensations of providence in and toward His church* declare His pleasure. The Shepherd of Israel gathers, feeds, increases, and prospers His flock. Again, He chastises, afflicts, and scatters them. The eyes and the heart of the Lord are upon the church perpetually. He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in His right hand. Zion is engraven upon "the palms of His hands, and her walls are continually before Him." (Isa. xlix. 16.) Even when these are broken down, He returns to the long desolations. "He will build up Zion, and appear in His glory." (Ps. cii. 16.) At times He sends "a plentiful rain to confirm His inheritance when it is weary," and He makes His people and "the

places round about His hill a blessing." (Ezek. xxxiv. 26.) Again, He lays waste His vineyard, and commands "the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." (Isa. v. 6.) With His fan in his hand He thoroughly purges His floor. His "fire is in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem." (Isa. xxxi. 9.) Seasons of sifting and trial in the church are sent for the fuller and brighter display of her holy profession, and for the purification of her members. The remnant left after visitations of judgment are consecrated and blessed—"I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. xiii. 9.) The Divine dispensations *toward* the church, as well as those *within* her, manifest Jehovah's pleasure prospering in the Redeemer's hand. The severity of God in the rejection of the Jews made way for the display of His goodness in the calling of the Gentiles. The persecutions of the church have promoted her purity and enlargement. The sufferings of our Covenanted fathers were made the means of testing great principles, and of diffusing them throughout the earth. Days of affliction often prove to the church, as they do to individual believers, seasons of blessing. When the chaff is blown away, the precious grain is gathered as the seed of a future harvest. Graces exposed to fiery trials are thereby refined and strengthened; and, when brought out of them, they are found more precious than perishable gold, to "praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

The full *establishment of the reign of righteousness and peace* in the earth is evidently God's pleasure. This is a chief design for which the scheme of natural things was brought into existence—this the grand end of all Providential movements. Evil, wide-spread and long-existing, is restrained, crushed, and ultimately subdued and banished. The kingdom of God shall be universally

established. The enthroned Mediator puts down all opposing rule and authority, and assumes His great power to roign. "Righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all the nations." The "mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." (Ps. lxxii. 3.) The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. The kingdom of truth, light, and love shall be universally established. "Men shall be blessed in the Redeemer, and all nations shall call Him blessed." (Ps. lxxii. 17.) This is the grand destiny to which the world's history looks forward; and the roll of ages, and all providential changes, are hastening its full development. It is Jehovah's highest pleasure that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. When all opposing authority and power shall have been put down, the exalted Mediator "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 8.) "The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." (Zech. xiv. 9.) "Every knee shall bow" in homage to Him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

II. Consider Jehovah's pleasure

IN CHRIST'S HANDS, AND ITS CONSEQUENT PROSPERITY.

The text contains the emphatic assurance that Jehovah's purpose will take effect. Not the smallest part of it can possibly fail. In the Divine dispensations there are no disappointments, and no successful resistance. The grand reason is that the government is upon Jehovah's shoulders, and the management of all is in His hands.

It was *entrusted to Him from eternity*. "Help" to uphold His people and cause, and to carry out into execution the whole plan, was laid upon "One that is mighty." He is the "elect" servant of the Father, whom He upholds, and in whom His soul delights. He was set up from

overlasting; and into His hands was committed the wondrous design of making the brightest display of God's glory, in man's salvation. As Mediator of the covenant, He undertook the momentous affair, and "engaged His heart to draw near the Father." He struck hands and became Surety. The whole contrivance of the covenant of grace was laid upon Him, and he willingly consented to the arrangement. Infinite love and wisdom could find none so suitable. He took in hand to fulfil all God's pleasure, in rescuing men from sin and misery, and to give them eternal salvation. Thus was He given "a covenant of the people," to "establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages."

He was early exhibited *carrying it forward*. So soon as man had sinned, and the curse had entered, the Mediator was seen engaged in the administration of the covenant. He displayed His regal authority in pronouncing sentence upon the serpent, on the ground, and upon the offending human pair. He spoke the message of peace and love to the fallen and guilty in the first promise. The pleasure of Jehovah prospering in the Messiah's hands was seen in calling the patriarchs, and in giving the law, with its ordinances and ceremonies—types and shadows of good things to come. It was a gracious dispensation, adapted to the childhood of the church, permeated with promises and principles of infinite tenderness and beneficence. God's dealings with His ancient covenant-people showed in all things His good pleasure in making to them spiritual discoveries and conferring eminent blessings. At the time fixed in the Abrahamic covenant, He broke the yoke of the Egyptian oppressor, and, with a high hand, He led them out from the iron furnace. Their whole leading to the land of promise was in sovereign love and condescending grace and mercy. He divided before them the Red Sea, and destroyed their enemies. The cloudy pillar—the symbol of His gracious presence—conducted them through the desert. He fed

them with manna from heaven, and gave them water from the rock to drink. He took them into covenant with Himself at Sinai, and from "His right hand went a fiery law for them." He appointed for them statutes and ordinances most righteous. His tabernacle was placed among them; and He walked with them, owning them to be a people of inheritance and "a peculiar treasure." Throughout the ancient economy, in the marked separation and blessing of Abraham's seed, there was a wondrous display of sovereign grace and electing love. In the new economy—to the Christian church—there is a much fuller and brighter manifestation of Jehovah's good pleasure in relation to man's salvation. Ancient shadows have given place to the living glorious substance. What was ambiguous in former revelations has been clearly explained. The darkness that rested on the sanctuary and its worship has been illuminated. We now see the entire fabric of creation and the whole system of providence subordinated to the scheme of human redemption. The pleasure of Jehovah was ever prospering in the Messiah's hands from the Fall till His advent in the flesh. When the "Desire of all nations" comes to His temple, the revolutions that take place among the nations are the instrumentality employed for accomplishing His designs of love and mercy towards the church, established upon the mountains and crowned with honour and blessing.

The Redeemer's *atoning death* pre-eminently exhibits the pleasure of Jehovah. To this, as the grand crisis of the world's history, and the ground of the church's salvation, all promises, prophecies, and types, and all providential movements looked forward from the beginning. The Saviour to come was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He was the fulfilment of all the promises given to the fathers. To Abraham, He was held forth as "the Seed," in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. He was seen by Jacob as "the Shiloh," to whom "the gathering" and obedience of the nations

should be. Isaiah beheld Him as the suffering "Servant" of Jehovah, and as a mighty Deliverer. To Him all the prophets bore witness, when they "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." All "the pleasure of Jehovah," and that in which His glory is made great, was entrusted to the Redeemer to accomplish, and was destined without fail to prosper in His hands. But, in a special sense, His atoning death was the pleasure of the Lord. It was the grand design of the counsels of eternity. The Surety of the covenant was appointed, and He willingly engaged to suffer and die as the chosen victim for human transgression. In "the fulness of time" He came to do the will of the Father. In the most momentous crisis of His obedience on earth a voice from the excellent glory again and again proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Father had infinite complacency in the Saviour's undertaking, and in all that He did and suffered for its accomplishment. His death was that of a substitute for sin; and in it He finished the work that was given Him to do, and glorified the Divine character, counsels, and government. The overpowering glory of all God's perfections was seen amidst the agonies of Gethsemane, and the darkness of the crucifixion. This was the centre of the whole Divine government, and the great end of the Saviour's mission. He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." He "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The noon-tide display of the love of God was here. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.) "God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) God's justice, holiness, truth, and love received their brightest illustration, and were seen in perfect harmony in the cross. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

(Ps. lxxxv. 11.) The *results* of the atonement bring a revenue of boundless honour to all the persons of the Godhead, and to the whole Divine government. When it pleased the Father to bruise Him, and put Him to grief, a way was opened up for the brightest display of all God's glory in man's redemption. The law is "magnified and made honourable," and "the Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake." By the "stripes" of the suffering Saviour sinners in vast numbers are healed; enemies are vanquished, hosts of evil are brought down, and everything that would prevent the full manifestation of Jehovah's purpose of love and mercy to the world is removed. The full glad tidings of salvation issue from the atoning death of Christ. "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews ii. 10.)

Again, by the *communication of the Spirit*, the pleasure of Jehovah prospers in the Redeemer's hand. In the eternal covenant the Third Person of the Godhead was a consenting and approving party. In every part of the costly scheme of human redemption, He cordially co-operates. The whole application of the purpose of God's love and mercy, and of the Redeemer's purchase, is in His hands. When He comes, as the fruit of the Saviour's ascension to heaven, it is to "glorify Christ," and to take of the things that are Christ's, and show them to His people. He is now, in His whole mission and work, "the Comforter" sent as the substitute of Christ, to carry forward His work on earth, till His kingdom shall be fully established, and all the elect shall be brought home to glory. The saving work of the Spirit on the human soul in awakening, converting, sanctifying, and comforting, is the pleasure of Jehovah. Thus the moral image of Christ is implanted, and the renewed believer is enabled to do those things which are pleasing in His sight. As He receives the seal and earnest of the Spirit, He enjoys fellowship with God,

and becomes partaker of all spiritual blessings. The effusion of the Spirit on the church at different epochs displays the exceeding greatness of His power, and His condescending wondrous love. He dwells in Zion as His chosen rest: He waters His heritage with a plenteous rain. Its teeming fertility gives evidence of the abundance of the blessing conferred. And the works of faith and labours of love performed by the church attest that she has been made a blessing in the earth. Thus did the pleasure of Jehovah greatly prosper in the plentiful effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost; and thus, too, in many subsequent periods of revival, His presence and efficacious agency have been the source of rich and manifold blessing. The dry bones have been awakened, and become instinct with life. Spiritual light has increased in brightness and splendour, and been widely diffused. Multitudes of saved ones have been added to the church. Men, called and separated, have been taken into "the bond of the covenant;" and as they became "a willing people" in "the day of power," they have shone forth numerous and attractively beautiful, as the pearly dew-drops "from the womb of the morning." All that the Spirit does savingly, in reviving the church, and rendering it verdant and fruitful, is eminently matter of Divine complacency and delight—the pleasure of Jehovah prospering in the Redeemer's hand. The dispensation of the Spirit is His. He asks the Father, and sends forth the Comforter. When those who are athirst come to Him, out of their belly He causes to flow rivers of living water. He pours water in abundance upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; and they "shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses." The future period of the church's enlargement and blessing will be the season at once of the Spirit's glorious power, and of the Saviour's universal blessing. Her "righteousness shall go forth as brightness," and "the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem

in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Boulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Isa. lxii. 3, 4.)

Lastly—*By powerful and glorious interpositions in Providence, the pleasure of Jehorah prospers in the Redeemer's hand.* Providence is the unfolding of God's purpose, and the fulfilment of Holy Scripture. The enthroned Mediator sits on the throne of universe, and all providential movements and events are under His direction and control. He is the living spirit in the wheels. In appearance as a man, He sits on the throne above the wheels. With resplendent glory, the bow in the cloud encircles the throne, to indicate that all His administrations towards the church are in covenant-wisdom and love. He alone is found able and willing to unloose the seven-sealed book of the Divine purpose, and to shed the light of His glory upon its pages, however dark and obscure. Wrathful inflictions upon enemies, deliverance and blessing to His people, are Jehovah's pleasure entrusted to the Mediator's hands. He has power to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. His work of vengeance displays the glory of His justice and holiness, and is rendered conducive to the best interests of His church. By fearful works in righteousness, He answers the prayers of His saints. When He breaks the heart of ungodly power, and subverts systems of iniquity, He builds up Zion, and establishes the kingdom that shall never pass to another people. The Mediator rules in heaven, and among earth's inhabitants, and does whatever is His sovereign pleasure. He cannot fail nor be discouraged, however numerous and powerful may be His enemies, however strong their opposition, till "He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law." The final issue of all providential changes is the bright display of the Redeemer's glory in the church's universal establishment and completed salvation. "All the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree,

have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it." (Ezek. xvii. 24.)

III. THE GROUNDS OF ASSURANCE THAT JEHOVAH'S PLEASURE WILL FINALLY AND FULLY PROSPER IN THE REDEEMER'S HANDS.

The case is in no wise uncertain or doubtful. There can be no disappointment or failure, in relation to aught that is entrusted to the management of the Mediator. Under His administration the design of Jehovah will be perfectly accomplished.

He is, first, *pre-eminently qualified* for the important undertaking. His name alone is excellent. The fulness of the Godhead bodily is in His person. All Divine perfections and resources are in Him. (Col. i. 19.) His fitness for the execution of the purpose arises not merely from the Divine appointment,—the plenitude of Divine love and truth and power are in Christ. His omnipotent power bids defiance to the attempts of all creatures, and renders failure in His plans impossible. This is the tried foundation on which the building of mercy stands secure. This is the fathomless, inexhaustible fountain, from which the streams of grace and love for ever flow. To the Redeemer belongs every suitable qualification for effecting the high designs of infinite wisdom, and to Him pertains the full and undivided glory.

Assured promises, exceeding great and precious, secure the accomplishment of this prediction. The faithfulness of God in covenant is pledged to effect the Divine purposes. The promises, absolute and unconditional, which are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus," are the declarations of God's love toward the church. These all have a primary reference to the Saviour—"the mercy promised to the fathers"—and to the work of human salvation, which was entrusted to Him to accomplish. He was early held forth as "the Seed of the woman," who should bruise the

serpent's head; as the seed of Abraham, in whom the nations should be blessed; as the offspring of David, who would sit upon His throne, and reign gloriously to the ends of the earth. He was foretold as "the Shiloh," to whom should be "the gathering of the people." He was "the corn of wheat," that, by dying, was to bear a plentiful harvest. Exalted at the Father's right hand, He was to reign till all His enemies would be made His footstool. A seed was guaranteed to serve Him, to be accounted to Him "for a generation; they shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this." (Ps. xxii. 30, 31.) These promises can never fail. Divine power and faithfulness are pledged for their fulfilment. All people shall do service to the Redeemer; all kindreds of the nations shall render homage to Him. Jehovah's pleasure shall continue to prosper in the Saviour's hands, until every gracious promise that God has given shall be fully accomplished.

All that would *hinder the fulfilment* of God's good pleasure is *now restrained*, and will *ultimately be removed*. The Mediator is exalted to hold in check and subvert all opposing power. Enemies of whatever kind have been already conquered in the cross; and the risen Saviour sits at the Father's right hand, thence expecting till they all shall be made His footstool. Great mountains are overturned; swelling seas are divided. He opens a path of safety for His redeemed through the mighty waters. The universal world-powers, one after another, are brought down and destroyed. The "little stone," cut out without hands, becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. When the four horns, the emblem of persecuting powers, push against Jerusalem to destroy her, there are raised up four carpenters, who fray them, and completely subvert them. He who framed from eternity the purpose of wisdom and love, for the manifestation of His own glory and the church's good, will effectually overturn all obstacles and hostile powers, until He come whose

right it is, and it shall be given Him. (Ezek. xxi. 27.) The Redeemer, into whose hands is put the execution of Jehovah's purpose, removes great impediments outwardly, and strong internal opposition. A people are made willing in the day of His glorious power. He is "Head over all things to His church;" and all events and powers, even those which appear the most contrary and hostile, He makes subservient to the one grand design, and to work together for the accomplishment of the glorious purpose.

What the reigning Mediator *has already done* is the sure pledge of what He will yet accomplish. He has revealed the Father. He came as the grand representative of the Godhead to our world, exhibiting His character, disclosing His purposes, and manifesting His glory. His name is "Wonderful," and He has ever done wonders. The sovereign pleasure of Jehovah in regard to nations, churches, and individuals, has, in all past time, prospered in the hand of the reigning Redeemer. He wrought all His pleasure on Babylon in her destruction. Cyrus, and Alexander, and Cæsar of old, and mighty warriors and conquerors in later times, were the appointed instruments of His vengeance upon guilty nations. The outpouring of the vials of His indignation wrought deliverance and manifold salvation for His people. The Lord has pleasure in them that fear Him, and that betake themselves with confidence to His mercy. For their sakes He has wrought desolations on the earth; He has given Egypt for their ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for them. Being precious in His sight, they are honourable; and loving them, He declares, "I will give men for them, and people for thy life." (Isa. xliii. 4.) Deliverances for the church in times past are the prelude and pledge of still greater in time to come. Anti-Christian power shall be subdued, and the heavens and earth shall be shaken and removed, as the designed preparation for the final establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Zion shall strengthen her stakes, and lengthen her cords; she shall "stretch forth" the curtains

of her habitation. Multitudes shall be gathered into her fellowship from all lands. The Lord will renew the former wonders of His power, in working deliverance and conferring blessing. "I will bring again from Bashan; I will bring again my people from the depths of the sea." (Ps. lxxviii. 22.) "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it." (Isa. ii. 2.) "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isa. xl. 5.)

IN CONCLUSION—

This subject calls upon us to *bless God for His eternal purpose of mercy*, and that its *accomplishment has been entrusted to the Redeemer*. The origin of human salvation, the source of all blessing, is here. The glory of God's wisdom and love, of His justice, holiness, and truth, are magnified in the wondrous design from eternity, and in its execution, embracing all time, and uniting and combining all events and agencies in nature and providence. "He hath made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." (Eph. i. 9, 10.) In the fulfilment of God's purpose of love towards the redeemed, Christ Jesus was set up as the church's living and life-giving Head, and as Head over all things in the universe for her benefit. Unto Him, as the blessed centre of unity, the saints in heaven and earth, and holy angels, are gathered; and all creatures and systems are rendered subservient to the grand design. Evil is restrained, brought down, and in due time banished from the earth. The worst of evils, the most powerful enemies, instead of frustrating the Divine purpose, are made to promote it. The death of Christ, the persecutions of the church, the temptations, sufferings, and diversified trials

of God's people,—all are rendered conducive to the prospering of Jehovah's good pleasure. Nothing is calculated to excite more lively joys, or to call forth more devout praise, than the unfolding and success of the Divine decree. It is the sovereign determination of a will which is infinitely holy, and just, and good. It makes effectual provision for the grandest display of the Divine glory, and is productive of the highest good to the universe. This is fitted at all times to swell the heart with gratitude and wonder, and to elicit the most grateful praise. "The Lord reigneth. He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved." (Ps. xciii. 1.) "Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." (Ps. cxv. 3.)

It concerns us now to *take hold of God's covenant*. We, too, should be well-pleased with Jehovah's Bruised One. He has been given "a covenant of the people." All the provision of God's everlasting love centres in Christ. He is all the grace, righteousness, and blessing of the covenant. As ratified by the blood of the Surety, the covenant has become a New Testament, conveying rich legacies to the heirs of salvation. Our first great duty is to embrace Christ Jesus as He is offered to us in the Gospel. We should receive His Person as our Head and Husband, lay hold on His righteousness for pardon and acceptance, and rest in Him for all our salvation. Our guilt will be aggravated, and our final state will be fearful, if we refuse the invitation, and reject the Saviour offered. He is assuredly ready and willing to receive sinners that come to Him, however guilty, and however manifold and aggravated their transgressions. He rejoices in their conversion. The Lord has pleasure in the prayers and holy services of His people. They will be to Him a name and a praise in the earth; they will ultimately behold His glory, and share His blessedness throughout eternity. From the consideration of such high and wondrous

privilege, should we not be led to devote ourselves entirely to Him as our covenant-portion, that we may serve Him in newness of life, as the people of His inheritance!

We have here, too, presented the *strongest grounds of assured confidence and of joyful hope*, in relation to the church's work, and in all her troubles. His saints are in His hand. Their work is under His eye. His power is guaranteed to strengthen and uphold, to sustain and bless them in its performance; and when it shall have been finished, from His own hand, gloriously lifted up, they will receive the recompense of the reward. He never can forget or forsake the church that He loved and chose from eternity, and that he purchased with His blood. Her name is indelibly engraven on the palms of His hands, and her walls are continually before Him. Trials of every kind to the church, as appointed in sovereign wisdom, and sent from Christ's hand, are a means of blessing. They are all now working together for good; and when they have served their designed purpose, they shall issue in a state of greatly increased spiritual enjoyment. Heresies, divisions, internal corruptions, as well as persecutions, are designed tests of the church's faith and fidelity; and are overruled for her purification and future enlargement. The principles of truth that are sown, as "a handful of corn" on "the tops of the mountains," become the seed of a harvest rich with prosperous fruit. The blood of martyrs proves to be the seed of the church. "They that came of Jacob"—as a worm small and down-trodden—"shall bud and blossom, and fill the face of the world with fruit." In keeping the word of the Saviour's patience, His true witnesses are preserved "from the hour of temptation," that comes "upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The power of the church's Head, and His faithful word of promise, alike assure her true members that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; and that the cause which they maintain shall one day triumph over all opposition. The saints

may over rejoice that, in all conflicts and trials, God is accomplishing in and towards them all His good pleasure. In the Saviour's hands, they and all their interests are perpetually secure, and the issues of all His dealings towards them can only be joyful and blessed. They are "chosen in the furnace of affliction," and prepared as vessels of mercy; and when they shall have been ultimately brought to glory, they will then know that all that befel them in any way was ordained for the best, appointed in infinite wisdom and sovereign love. "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." (Ps. cxvii. 7.)

Finally, we *should make Jehorah's good pleasure ours*, as the Messiah, in whose hand it prospers, ever does. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. It was His meat and drink to do the will of His Father, by obeying and suffering, and to finish His work. Like Him "who went about doing good," we should seek first that kingdom which is "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." We should work the work of the Lord in our day; and fervently should we pray that His will may be done on earth, as in heaven. Constantly should we seek that all the good pleasure of His goodness, and "the work of faith with power," should be fulfilled in us and others. In wondrous condescension, He is pleased to employ human instrumentality for the destruction of evil, and for filling the earth with the brightness of His glory. Our highest honour is to be employed as labourers for effecting this joyful consummation. The work has paramount claims upon all our powers and resources, and is worthy of the entire devotedness of our hearts and lives. While we willingly yield ourselves to the service, ever should we earnestly pray, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it." (Ps. xc. 16, 17.)

THE NEW SONG.

REVELATION v. 9—"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

THE fifth chapter of the Apocalypse, which is a continuation of the preparatory vision recorded in the preceding chapters, opens with a farther manifestation of the glory of Him that sat upon the throne,—the chief design being to exhibit *the method of the Divine government*, particularly in relation to the church of redeemed sinners. The administrations of providence toward the world and toward the church, which is the centre of the whole, are set forth under the symbol of a book, seven-sealed, held in the hand of Him who occupied the throne. As ancient books were formed of rolls of papyrus or parchment, when each seal is broken, a part of the record is disclosed, and there is presented to view an expressive hieroglyphic emblem, discovering the Divine dispensation towards the church. One after another the different seals are unloosed, and the whole record is fully disclosed; and only when the last seal is broken, will the contents of the book be fully unfolded. When none in the ranks of creatures, in heaven or earth, could respond to the proclamation, nor was able to open the book, or to loose its seals, one of the elders consoled the weeping Apostle, and declared, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah," the "Root of David," hath "prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." This is the glorified Redeemer, invested with supreme authority, and having pre-eminent fitness for the important undertaking. He is displayed in

His eternal Godhead, as "the Root of David." He has all kingly authority, and is the grand subject of ancient prophecy (Gen. xlix. 9), as the "Lion of Judah's tribe." Like a "Lamb, as it had been slain," symbolizing His atoning sacrifice, and the perpetual memorial of it in heaven. He appeared "in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and of the elders." He is the grand central glory of the Divine government, as He maintains the nearest and most endeared fellowship with the redeemed for ever. His "seven horns and seven eyes" are emblematical of His almighty power, and of His perfect Omniscience. He has all strength and might for effecting the high designs of His mediatorial rule, as in Him are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and as upon Him rests without measure the Spirit of revelation, which is sent forth by Him. He is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation to every one that believeth." Endued with such high qualifications, the Lamb came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, as if it pertained to Him by rank and office, and none else had the right to intermeddle in the mighty affair. Immediately is He recognised by all the dwellers in glory as being alone adequate and pre-eminently fitted for the great work of unfolding the Divine purposes, and conducting the providential government. The four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders, with golden harps of praise, and golden vials full of fragrant odours of spiritual prayers, and both combined, confess the fitness of the Saviour for the high office which He assumes; and, with fervent desires and joyful thanksgivings, ascribe to Him all worth and worthiness, as He engages in its execution. The adoring worship of the ransomed church on earth and in heaven, leads holy angels to join in the same ascription of praise to the Lamb slain; while the chorus of universe, of "every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," unite in rendering "honour, and glory, and power,

to Him who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb." This is much more than a lively, lofty description. It is a vision for the whole church of Christ, in every age and country, till the end of time; pregnant with instruction and comfort the most weighty and joy-inspiring. Every one to whom the Gospel message is addressed has a deep personal interest in it; as we must learn and understand the New Song, and join the adoring company in singing it now, if we would at length, with golden harps, perpetually in tune, sing it before the throne in glory. In expounding and applying the instruction and consolation presented in this sublime representation, we shall consider—

I. THE CHARACTER AND SPECIAL LESSONS OF THE NEW SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

In the Bible, especially in the devotional parts of it, there is frequent mention made of a New Song. The designation is given to a song that is newly composed—to the grateful praise that is rendered for new mercies received—and to that which is sung with affections elevated and hearts enlarged. The song of the redeemed, in its matter and spirit, is perpetually new, as salvation-blessings ever transcend the loftiest praise; and the saints, as they enjoy them, speak of them with sweet and rapturous melody. This vision of the opening of the sealed book, and of the rejoicing company of saints and angels, is not alone for heaven. It is indeed seen in its fullest and loftiest manifestation there; but it is designed for the church on earth too. The "golden vials full of odours" are the prayers of saints; and those that ascended from earth give place in glory to the harps of unceasing praise. The exalted Personage, whose worth and worthiness are celebrated, is known and loved supremely here. Seen by faith in His incomparable beauty and excellency, He is the great Object of adoring wonder—the grand theme of grateful and joyful praise to His saints. "The Lord is my strength and song; and He is become my salvation." (Ps. cxviii. 14.)

As we experience deliverance from his hand, and taste that He is gracious, "a new song is put into our mouth, even praise to our God." (Ps. xl. 3.) And as we receive from Him salvation-blessings and share His victories, we triumph in Christ. Not content to be solitary singers, from the fulness of the heart, we excite others to unite in lofty praise—"O sing unto the Lord a new song; show forth His salvation from day to day." (Ps. xevi. 1, 2.) "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things. His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory." (Ps. xeviii. 1.) The spiritual praises of the redeemed are begun and learned here. They are sung in the sanctuary and great congregation—they are heard in the dwellings of the righteous—they are songs of the wilderness and of the night—they are uttered from dying beds, and as the pilgrims pass through the river of death. The new song rises to its highest notes and sweetest melody in heaven, and is sung by saints made perfect, and holy angels, throughout eternity. The exalted Saviour is the grand Object of adoration and praise. He appears first in the midst of the throne, surrounded by the ransomed company, and by adoring angels. He sits at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He stands at the altar, interceding as the great High Priest of our profession. He is at the head of the saints, brought home to heaven, leading them to the heavenly pastures, and to "living fountains of water," and conducting their lofty praise. When a door is opened in heaven, and the eye of faith, in its clearest vision, beholds its surpassing wonders, Christ Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, is the brightness of the celestial glory. He is all in all in heaven. All the sights and sounds of the heavenly world are full of Christ. "The glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." All the palms of the redeemed are waving in His honour, all their crowns are prostrate at his feet, all their harps are vocal in His praise. Thus are we impressively taught

that whatever men make of Christ now, in heaven His glory is everything. True religion on earth is only different *in degree*, not *in kind*, from the religion of heaven. And as the Saviour is the First and the Last—the central object and the crowning glory of the worship and service of the inhabitants of heaven—so must He be that of ours on earth, if we would at length behold His face in righteousness, and be with Him where He is, beholding His glory.

The song of the redeemed in honour of Christ exhibits the perfect harmony between the truths of the Bible and the sentiments of heaven.

Justly has it been said that the Bible is heaven in principle and description, and that heaven is the Bible in substance and living action. If we search the Scriptures from beginning to end, and compare the record with what we are told of the views and employments of the dwellers in glory, we shall find the display of the character and work of the Redeemer in strict accordance. The Scriptures testify of Christ as the Son of God, the Creator and moral Governor of the universe, the redeeming Head of the Church, the Lord of glory. The same illustrious names and high dignities pertain to Him as He is seen in heaven, and as He is worshipped by glorified saints and the hosts of unsinning angels. History, type, and prophecy all concentrate in Him, and reach in Him their end and perfect fulfilment. Like the ladder which Jacob saw in vision at Bethel, the Saviour connects heaven and earth. Comparing the testimony of the word concerning Him with the manifestation of His glory in heaven, it may be rightly said that He brings down heaven to earth; while, as we behold “the King in His beauty,” we are raised up to heaven, and rejoice in the glory to be revealed. We sit even now “in heavenly places” with Christ. If we are with the Lamb’s company on Mount Zion on earth, and have the Father’s name inscribed on our foreheads, we behold by faith in bright prospect “the

land that is very far off." And when we shall afterwards enter it, as the ransomed of the Lord, it will be to us no strange land. We shall be with the Saviour whom we found in the Word, whose love and gracious presence we know on earth, and who, in matchless condescension, will come at last to receive us to Himself, that we may enjoy the nearest and most blissful fellowship with Him for ever.

The new song of the redeemed declares that salvation by Christ *is, in the highest degree, pleasing to God*, and that it *pacifies and purifies the sinner's conscience*. The loud and lofty sounds around the throne proclaim—"Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb." The principalities and powers in the heavenly places regard with enraptured wonder the exalted Saviour and the redemption which He has finished. The Father and the Son, seated on the throne, conduct the government of the universe with the object of developing the glorious plan of human salvation. The "seven lamps of fire" that burn before the throne shed abroad its glory. The "pure river of the water of life" that proceeds from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb, symbolizes the fulness and perpetuity of salvation-blessings, gladdening the church on earth, and diffusing everlasting bliss among the saints gathered home to heaven. God dwelling with His people, and their songs celebrating salvation, resounding continually before the throne, show that with the finished work of Christ the Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. The morning song of angels when the Redeemer became incarnate—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men"—is sung with enraptured delight, as the ransomed of the Lord return to Zion, and the nations of the saved, brought into the immediate presence of the Lamb, ascribe to Him all the glory of their salvation. The chief singers in heaven are those who are redeemed from the pit, and who, now glorified, are, through atoning blood, without spot before the throne.

Amid their triumphant joys and ecstatic praises, they remember that they were once sinners; and the thought of what they were, and of what the Saviour has done for them, enhances all their joys, and intensifies their praise. A principal note of their song is, "Thou hast washed us from our sins in Thy blood." Their consciences are now completely purged, so that the remembrance of former sins excites in them no painful feelings, and only leads them to joy in the God of their salvation. Their lips do not falter while they utter Jehovah's praise, nor their hands tremble as they touch the chords of the golden harps. They out-sing the angel-worshippers in glory. There is no feeling of distance or estrangedness throughout all the redeemed company. The chief of sinners, when brought home to heaven, appears in surpassing beauty; arrayed in the Elder Brother's righteousness, and made "perfect through His comeliness put upon them," they reflect His moral likeness. They come to full fellowship with the persons of the adorable Trinity, and with holy angels. In the most endeared intercourse with each other, with nothing to mar or interrupt it for ever, they have overflowing peace and endless felicity.

The song of the redeemed is evidently *the New Song*. In one view it is old, as the matter of it was made known to our first parents in the revelation of mercy given to them after the Fall, when, through Divinely-instituted sacrifices, they beheld by faith the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It was sung by Abel, when, in stated worship at "the end of the days," "he offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain." The triumphant song of Moses celebrated, in the signal deliverance wrought for Israel, a more glorious salvation to be afterwards accomplished by the death and conquest of the promised Saviour. Still, when the Redeemer had finished His work on earth, and ascended to glory, the song of the redeemed and the chorus of the angelic hosts became in a higher and special sense a *Now Song*, to

remain such to the end of time, and throughout all eternity. As the Captain of salvation ascended from earth, and "the everlasting doors" were opened to receive the mighty Conqueror to His mediatorial throne, angels and saints who were already in glory hailed His entrance with enraptured wonder and adoring praise. The song which they raised differed in clearness of conception and fulness of utterance from all that had been previously sung in heaven. It spoke of a mystery that had been hid for ages as now fully disclosed, and celebrated the honour and comely majesty of Death's Conqueror, the Saviour of men. The event celebrated, the Divine councils fulfilled in redemption finished, was wondrous and unexampled in the history of the universe. It was the one grand central event in the moral government of God, throwing the flood of a lofty illustration over the principles of the Divine rule, explaining all the history of its past dispensations toward our world, and brightening with the radiance of joyful hope all the future.

Then, the newness of the song is seen in *the vast number and variety of beings and characters* that are engaged in singing it. Angels that never fell, in their different ranks in glory, and as employed in the providential administration; and the redeemed among men, in all the diversity of their former conditions, and in their experiences of the salvation wrought for them; the wandering and lost recovered, the guilty pardoned, captives ransomed, brands plucked from the burning, blood-stained men clothed in the beauty of holiness; these all unite in the song, while each feels that he is under peculiar obligations of gratitude to sing it above all others. Then it is *perpetually new*, as the tribute of praise will be ever increasing in import and extent throughout future ages. In Apostolic times, through the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, multitudes, relinquishing Jewish superstition and pagan idolatry, united in singing the new song; and many forsook the foul orgies of false gods for the praises of Immanuel. It

was sung in the dark ages and in martyr times; resounding through gloomy prisons, and in the subterranean catacombs; and surrounding with brightness and glory the stake and the scaffold, so that spectators and persecutors heard with wonder and astonishment. At the era of the blessed Reformation the song of the redeemed, loudly sung in many lands, testified the joy of souls emancipated from guilt, and freed from the chains of error and idolatry, and was itself a mighty instrument for diffusing widely the truth as it is in Jesus. This, too, has been a chief glory of modern missions. In many pagan nations, idolatrous and savage men, awakened and changed by the power of Divine grace, have learned to celebrate the Redeemer's praise. The songs of salvation that are now sung by the converted heathen in different countries—by the saved of Israel, and by men rescued from popish darkness and idolatry—are the prelude of a yet wider spread of the Gospel, and of joyful praises to the Redeemer, which shall be rendered by all kindreds of the nations. "All ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him." (Ps. xxii. 27.) "His name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto His name, and a pure offering." (Mal. i. 11.) "The whole earth shall be filled with His glory." (Ps. lxxii. 19.)

The praise thus rendered on earth by the nations of the saved is the fit prelude to the triumphant songs of the redeemed brought home to heaven. By millions of saints made perfect, gathered from all kindreds and people and tongues, in lofty communion with holy angels, will the song of salvation be sung, with nothing to interrupt or damp the heavenly joys, with harps ever in tune, and in the conscious enjoyment of the unspeakable blessedness of completed salvation.

We proceed to consider—

II. THE MATTER OF THE NEW SONG, THAT ENTERS ESSENTIALLY INTO THE PRAISES OF THE SAINTS, WHETHER RENDERED ON EARTH OR SUNG IN HEAVEN.

1. The *worth and worthiness* of the Redeemer occupy a prominent place in the praises of heaven. This is the first and key-note of the song of the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders—the ministry and church of the first born—"Thou art worthy to take the book." Thus, in responsive measures, sing ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels that surround the throne, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." And when the chorus of universal nature leads forth the loud acclaim of praise, it is heard saying, "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." The first words of the swelling anthem of praise say of the Lamb—"Thou art worthy," incomparably, infinitely worthy. This is declaring Him (1) *to be above and beyond all creatures*, however dignified and excellent. None of these in heaven or in earth was found able to open the book, or to look thereon. He only was fit for the high undertaking. "His name alone is excellent: His glory reaches above the sky and the firmament." (2) It proclaims *His pre-eminence as Mediator*. A name has been *given* Him, which is above every name. He is "chiefest," or the standard-bearer, "among ten thousand," and "fairer than the children of men." For the whole Mediatorial undertaking, and the execution of every part of it, He is endued with a fitness and qualifications that we search for in vain among all the ranks of creatures, however exalted. His claims to the highest rank are peculiar and unequalled. Angels and saints regard them with veneration and wonder, while yet they are unable fully to comprehend them. "He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." (Col. i. 18.) And (3) it shows

the full, *loving acquiescence of all holy beings in the designation and work of the Mediator*. All heaven, and the whole church on earth, rejoice in the appointment of Christ to be Head. They extol the wisdom of the Father, and the fitness of the Son, as He is seen engaged in the execution of the lofty purpose. To Him is entrusted the whole administration. "The government is upon His shoulders." On Him, as a "nail in a sure place," is suspended "all the glory of His Father's house." He alone "builds the temple of the Lord, and will for ever bear the glory." (Isa. ix. 6; xxii. 23; Zech. vi. 13.) In His fitness for this high appointment, and in the wisdom, power, and integrity with which He discharges its important functions, the entire universe of holy intelligences fully and cordially acquiesce. The worth and worthiness of the Redeemer are felt in the deepest convictions of the heart, and are openly and fully confessed in the praises of saints and holy angels.

2. Another part of the matter of the New Song concerns the *sealed book*, which the Lamb prevails to open. This contains the *Divine purposes*, especially in relation to the church of the redeemed. The book is "the writing of the house of Israel,"—the fixed and unalterable design of Jehovah in relation to the election of grace. It is seen in the hand of Him that sits on the throne. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." None may challenge His sovereign prerogative, or alter His purpose. What His wisdom contrives, His power is engaged to execute. His designs can never be frustrated. "He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." The book is sealed with *seven seals*. The decrees of God are like Himself, inscrutable, deep-hidden from all creatures, and wholly unknown till they are revealed. God alone fully knows and can disclose His own purposes. The times and seasons He has put in His own power, and neither man nor angel can know the secret things of God.

but as He reveals them by His Spirit. The church of the redeemed is the great object of the Divine decree—the principal end of Divine revelations; as emanating from Him, they shine forth to illuminate the world's darkness. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." (Ps. l. 2.) The church is the centre of all providential movements; and while her glorious Head sits on the throne, and conducts the government of universe, He evolves continually His designs of infinite wisdom and love, and makes every new disclosure to contribute to the purity and prosperity of the church. In the prophetic vision, above the "wheels" that were "full of eyes" that revolved around a fixed centre, and "that turned not as they went," was a "throne," and one sitting upon it, "as the appearance of a man." (Ezek. i. 26.) The complicated movements were guided by holy intelligence. Revolving around the society of the redeemed, and moving ever to effect a pre-determined purpose, they are controlled and directed by the sovereign authority of the enthroned Mediator; and they cannot fail of accomplishing His high and wonderful designs. In the Divine decree and its fulfilment, the saints greatly rejoice; and these form a chief matter of their lofty praise—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." (Rom. xi. 33.)

3. *Providence in the hand of the Redeemer, unfolding the Divine purpose for the church's benefit, is another part of the matter of the New Song.* The whole providential rule is entrusted to the ascended Saviour; and He administers it for His own glory, and for the manifestation of His designs of wisdom and love toward His church from all overlasting. What takes place in time was first in God's eternal purpose; and from the beginning, so soon as man fell, He entered upon His great undertaking. He sustained the pillars of the world that were shaking through man's apostacy. Thenceforward He conducts the

whole administration, so as over to promote the church's benefit and blessing. "By Him all things *subsist*."* (Col. i. 7.) "He upholds all things by the word of His power." "He reigns in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isa. xxiv. 23.) The church that He has redeemed was the chosen object of His wisdom and love from eternity. The creation of the world had respect to her existence, and all natural objects were called into being, and their order and relations were settled for her benefit. Nations rise and fall for the church; and the end of all providential changes is her extension, purification, and ultimate triumph. "When the Most High divided the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deut. xxxii. 8, 9.) With each of the four great world-powers, the church of God came into contact. In succession they were called into existence, flourished and were overthrown, to subserve the purposes which they were designed to accomplish for the church. So will it be to the end. Dynasties exist and pass away, nations are prospered and smitten, and all human associations undergo changes, that they may promote the interests of the church of Christ, and contribute to her future glory. The enthroned Mediator—Zion's glorious King—presides over all these revolutions, and infallibly conducts them to their predestined end. The little stone cut out of the mountain without hands increased in volume and strength till it smote the feet and toes of the great image, and broke it to pieces, and it then became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Thus the kingdom of Christ, small and seemingly powerless in its beginning, is under the law of continual advancement. It is, in its nature and principles, antagonistic and destructive to whatever would oppose its

* Such is the proper rendering of the Greek term.

onward course; and when at length all hostile power and authority shall have been brought down, it will be universally established. No fifth universal world-power will be set up in the earth. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." (Rev. xi. 15.) "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." (Isa. ii. 2.)

4. Finally, *the opening up by the Redeemer of all individual providences* to His saints, and His guiding them to a desired issue, is matter of the song of the redeemed. Thus alone can we rightly understand and profit by providential dispensations. Besides the general government of the universe in the hands of the Mediator, He superintends and directs special movements and every particular dispensation. Nothing is too low or insignificant for His notice; nothing too high for His control. There is no providence that Christ as the Mediator does not direct and superintend. He numbers the hairs of His people's heads, and appoints all their goings. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) Providential dealings of the Redeemer towards His people are parts of the plan of the covenant which was devised in infinite wisdom and everlasting love. The seven-sealed book contains in its record some dark pages, even to the heirs of salvation; but when these are read in the view of the cross, or with the heart and eye directed to Him who receives and opens it, they become illuminated with the beams of His glory. He will shed light upon every dark record. All providences, prosperous and adverse, afflictions and disappointments, as well as benefits and blessings, are even now working together for good; and, in the end, they will be seen and felt to have been subserving ends the best and most salutary—purposes the most beneficent. When the Saviour

of sinners is the Supremo Ruler, and the opening of the book is entrusted to Him, nothing can befall His people but what is conducive to their highest good. The dispensation of providence, equally with that of the Gospel, is to them what Christ is,—it is the covenant of peace unfolded, ordered in all things and sure; all their salvation, and all their desire. The Elder Brother and living Head of the church is the Author and Disposer of all their afflictions and trials. Well may His servants trust Him to give “an expected end,” and to guide to a gracious and blessed issue. What they see not now they shall see hereafter. As they celebrate seasonable help given, and deliverances already wrought, they should sing in joyful expectation of future privileges and of ultimate victory. The assured promise is, “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him My salvation.” (Ps. xci. 15, 16.) “He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” (Ps. cvii. 7.) In triumphant strains they sing at last, “We went through fire and through water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.” (Ps. lxxvi. 12.) We consider—

III. THE GREAT WORK WHICH HE PERFORMED, AS DISPLAYING HIS PRE-EMINENT FITNESS TO UNFOLD THE DIVINE PURPOSE, AND TO ADMINISTER THE KINGDOM OF PROVIDENCE.

The ground of the Lamb's interference in the momentous affair of opening the sealed book is emphatically declared, “For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.” There are other grounds of worthiness in the Lamb slain, but this is the most conspicuous—ever deserving of the most grateful acknowledgment and of the highest praise. It is this above all that moves the hearts and accentuates the songs of the redeemed. Whatever the inhabitants of other worlds, or the dwellers on

this earth who have no interest in the work of redemption, may think or feel, all the redeemed cordially agree in the sentiment that He who has ransomed them by His blood has performed a work to which none other was competent, and for which He is entitled to the highest honour in heaven and earth. Redemption by the death of Christ, the sum and glory of the Gospel, is the grand theme of praise of the saints, and will be for ever. It is their song, *perpetually* new, ever sung with the liveliest gratitude, and with enraptured wonder.

First of all, the Lamb is celebrated as the *Great Atoning Sacrifice*. He is the grand Victim for human transgression; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—foreshadowed by ancient types, foretold by ancient prophecy, and at length, in the fulness of time, offered up a spotless sacrifice, to finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. The death of Christ was contemplated in the plan of the covenant from eternity; it was prospectively ratified by the blood of typical sacrifices, and became a New Testament so soon as was commenced its administration. To die an ignominious and accursed death, as His people's Substitute, was the condition on the Mediator's part of the covenant, and from the performance of it flow the reward promised to Him, and all privileges of His people. He appears now in glory, the Lamb as it had been slain, the covenant being ratified by His blood, and the perpetual merit and efficacy of His atonement recognised by all the inhabitants of heaven. By the one sacrifice of Himself, He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. This is the great reason of His pre-eminent worth and fitness to administer the Mediatorial office in all its functions. Saints, as they behold Him with wonder and delight, esteem Him worthy of the highest praise, because He was slain, and has thus fully performed His all-important undertaking.

Again, *redemption complete by His blood is His wonderful work*. This is the effect and application of the death of the

Redeemer. How amazingly pregnant and expressive is the ascription—“*Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*” With swelling hearts and loud voice the ransomed exclaim, “We have reason above all others to praise Thee for Thy atoning death, for by it we, who were lost in sin and sold into captivity, are redeemed to God, and made heirs of salvation.” This imports that He and He alone had the right of redemption. “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.” They are God’s by the common right of creation, and by His purpose of election in the covenant. But, through the Fall, they were sold and lost. The Surety engaged to bring the wandering and perishing back to God. By assuming their nature, He had the right of the kinsman Redeemer. By His death in their stead, He fully paid the ransom-price, and discharged all their vast debt. His life was fully offered as a substitute for the guilty. It was life most valuable given for life forfeited; a full payment for all the demands of the law and justice of God; a perfect equivalent for all the blessings of salvation. Redemption is now complete through the death of Christ; and flowing from it are all spiritual and eternal blessings. “In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Eph. i. 7.) The saved of the Lord are redeemed from the curse, rescued from the enemy’s hand, delivered from all evil. Their bodies, as well as their souls, share in the privileges of redemption; and all their possessions and relations, freed from the curse, are provided and conferred by Him who was slain to redeem them. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath delivered from the hand of the enemy.” (Ps. cvii. 2.) “Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all His iniquities.” (Ps. cxxx. 7, 8.) Above all, they are *redeemed to God*. The end is co-extensive with the design from eternity. They were given by the Father to Christ, and He undertook for them, and died in their stead, that

He might bring them to God. Their redemption includes their deliverance from wrath, from the bondage of sin, from death and evil of every kind. But chiefly they are brought near to God, reclaimed to His service, restored to His favour and friendship, and introduced to fellowship the most intimate and endearing with Him on earth and in heaven. They are redeemed that they may receive the adoption of sons, and that there may be sent into their hearts "the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father." They are brought home to the Father's house, and welcomed to all the entertainment of it. They enjoy its blessed privileges as if they had never sinned. All distance and estrangement are for ever done away. Their felicity is uninterrupted and unending; they will show forth the glory of God's salvation for ever. "The redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. xxxv. 9, 10.)

For this redemption the full and heartfelt ascription of praise is to the Lamb slain. With peculiar emphasis these joyful jubilee singers exclaim in the opening of their song—"THOU ART WORTHY." Standing in His immediate presence, they give Him all the honour of the work, and confess themselves indebted to Him for all their blessedness. "Thou art worthy. O blessed Thou, the Lamb, as it had been slain, the Lion of Judah's tribe. Thou, and none other, hast done this great work, and Thou only hast the right to bear the glory." It is wonderful that such a person should become the Redeemer of the lost—wonderful that His blood should be shed for the guilty—and most wonderful that through its application, miserable, perishing sinners should be brought home to glory, and exalted to the highest position of honour and dignity before the throne. The song of the redeemed declares the singular worth of the Redeemer, and their immense

obligations to His atoning sacrifice. To His death, they are indebted for all that is excellent in their state and character, and for their heavenly felicity. His blood was purposely shed for them, and the costly ransom was accepted of God on their behalf. Hence are they delivered from wrath, presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and made partakers of happiness unspeakable and eternal. All Divine perfections are brightly displayed in their completed salvation; and a rich revenue of praise redounds to all the persons of the blessed Godhead throughout eternity.

The redemption celebrated is of *wide extent*, as it is adapted to all. Nowhere is it said to reach the whole race, or to be provided for every individual of the human family. The ransomed, chosen from the mass of perdition, are redeemed from the world lying in the wicked one, separated and brought home to glory. But they are *taken out* of "every kindred and tongue, and people and nation." They are of all *families*—the minor divisions of mankind. On earth they spoke all languages, while in heaven their tongue, vocal in exulting praise, is one. Men of all races unite in the song; and the people of all nations, great and small, worship the enthroned Redeemer, and render to Him the willing homage of their grateful praise. "The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." (Rev. xxi. 25.) The great salvation is wonderfully adapted to men in every condition, and to all human relations and circumstances; and in the final gathering of the redeemed to the general assembly and church of the First Born, it will be seen in its full and transcendent glory. The innumerable company of all nations and kindred, and people and tongues that stand before the throne, arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands, in spotless purity, as triumphant conquerors, cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 9, 10.)

Finally—*The office and dignity to which the redeemed are advanced are celebrated in their grateful praise.* “Thou hast made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth.” They are “*a kingdom of priests.*” As kings they are elevated from a low condition, and share with Christ a state of honour and dignity. The “kingdom of God” is within them; they have power over evil; they have a part in all the Mediatorial dominion, and are partakers of its abundant privileges. They are separated—the unction of priestly consecration is upon them—and they are called to holy services to Jehovah as their covenant-God, ministering continually at the altar, and living as wholly the Lord’s. They are “*a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.*” They have a royal honour and dignity, even when they are serving as priests at the altar. They “*reign on the earth.*” * They reign spiritually with Christ, their exalted Head, as they are associated with Him in princely power, and the mind that was in Christ is in them. They have power in the world; their principles are continually spreading, and their testimony prevails for the subversion of error and sin. They have a special interest in all that is doing for the establishment of the Redeemer’s kingdom in the earth. They actively aid in the diffusion of Scriptural truth. The progress of Christian missions, dispelling darkness, and bringing down superstition and idolatry, is eminently their work, and they have a part in their future glorious triumph. In the ultimate universal establishment of the reign of righteousness and peace in the earth, the saints shall possess high power and authority throughout the nations. The slain witnesses, raised from the dead, are caught up to the heaven of civil and ecclesiastical power, while their enemies behold them. “The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven.

* The most ancient MSS. give the verb in the *present*, not in the

shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (Dan. vii. 27.) The witnesses who suffered for Christ in their spirit and principles revive; they "rise and reign with Christ a thousand years." This royal dignity of the saints on earth will issue in "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The redeemed who on earth served Him and suffered for Him will then reign with Him for ever. They will be crowned princes, and as conquerors they shall sit down with him on His throne; they shall inherit the kingdom, and enjoy its glory and blessedness throughout eternity.

IN CONCLUSION—

The New Song—1. *Presents the highest objects of believing contemplation.* The fitness, glory, and excellency of the Lamb slain unspeakably transcend those of all creatures, the most exalted in the universe. His are all power, wisdom, and knowledge; His all meekness, love, and condescension. Appearing in our nature in heaven, He is in the midst of glorified saints and adoring angels. He has "seven horns and seven eyes." With the scars of His sufferings upon Him, and presenting continually before the throne the memorial of His atoning death, He is exalted "above all principality and power." All the dwellers in glory recognise His pre-eminent fitness to be the ruler in providence, and to administer the covenant of redemption. They leave their seats before the throne, and cast their crowns at His feet, while they render to Him, with joyful hearts, the glory due to His name.

2. *The same blessed Saviour*, thus exalted and praised in heaven, is surely fit to be the grand object of our present trust and hope—the Alpha and Omega of our adoring and grateful praise. Like the celestial singers, we should ever ascribe to the Lamb slain all worth and worthiness. Beholding His matchless person, we should embrace Him as our best and only Beloved and Friend, and repose our entire confidence upon Him. His finished work, the

foundation of all our blessings, is the fit theme of our grateful praise, while His exaltation to universal dominion entitles Him to the veneration and devoted service of the ransomed church in heaven and on earth. "Because He is thy Lord, worship thou Him." The Lamb slain, as He appears opening the seven-sealed book, conducting the providential government, and applying the purchased salvation, is alone worthy of all our confidence, and love, and devoted service. He is lifted up as a moral magnet to attract the hearts of all the redeemed to Him. (John xii. 32.) As they see His suitableness and surpassing beauty, the lustre of all other objects fades in their view, and Jesus, their Saviour and Friend, is to them all and in all. In the thoughts and feelings of the heart, with the continual praises of the lips, and, above all, in the perpetual service of the life, we should render the ascription of fervant praise to Him who performs a work for which none other in the universe was found adequate, and who alone is entitled to bear the glory. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee. We will be glad and rejoice in Thee. We will remember thy love more than wine; the upright love Thee." "Whom have I in the heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." (Song i. 2, 3; Ps. lxxiii. 25.)

3. The matter of the New Song presents the most powerful motives to *all holy living and devoted obedience*. If we are redeemed, we are bought with an inestimable price. We are saved from the curse, rescued from the enemy's hand, delivered from a present evil world, freed from sin, and redeemed to God, to serve Him, be like Him, and enjoy Him for ever. What weighty obligations does such a privilege impose on us? that we should be "holy in all manner of conversation," that we should live as ransomed ones, showing "forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light!" Then, as interested in the purchased redemption, we are a "royal

priesthood," predestined to this high office and distinction in the counsel of peace from eternity, called and consecrated in time, and exalted to reign on the earth. Associated with Christ in the victories of His truth, and sharing in the progress and privileges of His kingdom, we are destined to sit with Him on His throne, and to have fellowship with Him in heavenly glory. How solemnly are we hereby called to live and act as persons consecrated to God, to minister at His altar, presenting ourselves a living sacrifice, and offering the sacrifices of prayer and praise to God continually, giving thanks to His name. As kings reigning on the earth, we should cherish a princely spirit, by faith subduing corruptions in our own hearts, and overcoming the world. The kingdom of God within us is righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost. We reign with Christ on the earth when we live as children of the King, ever rejoicing in Him. We go in to the King, importunately seeking blessings for ourselves and others. Our duty is to pray and labour continually for the coming of His kingdom. Our appropriation of Him as a Prince and Saviour, and all our interest at the throne, we should improve in seeking blessings for the church and the world. "Thou art my King; command deliverances for Jacob." As witnesses for His crown-rights, it behoves us to be jealous for His honour. We should contend against His enemies, earnestly labour and pray for the prevalence of His reign of righteousness and peace, and anticipate with joyful confidence the triumph of His cause and the establishment of His princely dominion.

4. Finally, we should always *seek to learn and sing the new song now on earth*, that we may be prepared to join in the higher praises of the redeemed in heaven. The object and matter of praise are the same in the song of saints on earth and in heaven. It is Christ and His salvation—Christ exalted to rule, and administering the whole government in providence and grace—that form the burden of the song, the beginning and end of the saints' praise—

the chorus of holy angels and of the whole creation. With this object and matter, it deeply concerns us to be experimentally acquainted. We begin to sing the new song, when, taught by the Spirit, we embrace Christ as our own Saviour and all our salvation. The experience of His power and love will constrain us to utter the joyful language of appropriation and of heartfelt confidence, "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song. He also is become my salvation." (Isa. xii. 2.) As we obtain new discoveries of His love and matchless excellency; as we partake of new deliverances and privileges, and have the hope of salvation increased, our hearts are attuned, and, with new and elevated affections, we speak aloud the voice of His praise. We sing the New Song in times of trouble. We have songs in the night, and to cheer us in our pilgrimage. Like Luther, a saint can say, "When I believe I sing; my trouble is gone." Not content with being solitary singers, we invite others to join in the song; and as we behold still greater wonders in the Person and work of the Saviour, and in the glory of His salvation spreading throughout the earth, and displayed in its full effulgence in glory, we delight in the prospect of singing the song of the redeemed in the immediate presence of the Lamb in glory. Thus do we put on a meetness for the full inheritance of the saints in light. We are trained here to the employments of the saints made perfect in heaven. We enjoy earnestness of bliss; and when our work on earth is done, and our training completed, we shall come with gladness and rejoicing into "the palace of the King," to abide for ever. The vials of prayer will be laid aside, and with harps of gold ever in tune, and with loudest and sweetest melody, we shall then sing for ever the new song, "THOU ART WORTHY TO TAKE THE BOOK, AND TO OPEN THE SEALS THEREOF, FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE AND NATION; AND HAST MADE US UNTO OUR GOD KINGS AND PRIESTS, AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH."

THE FRUITS OF THE EFFUSION OF THE SPIRIT.

ISAIAH xliv. 5.--“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

THE opening verses of this chapter contain a very rich view of God’s sovereign grace and covenant-mercy towards His ransomed people. At the close of the preceding chapter, He complains that Israel, though near to Him in profession and privilege, had not only withheld from Him the appointed sacrifices and offerings, but that they had even “wearied Him with their transgressions, and had made Him serve with their sins.” Yet, instead of wholly rejecting them because of their grievous provocations, He proclaims His name and glory as a sin-pardoning God. “I, even I, am He that blot out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” (Isa. xliii. 25.) Then, when they offend yet the more, He declares the tokens of His fearful displeasure, and the dread chastisements that were inflicted for their backsliding and rebellion, “Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.”

In the commencement of this chapter there is exhibited an attractive and wondrous display of Jehovah’s condescension and reigning grace. The same people, who had been apostate and rebellious, are addressed, “Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen.” Although they had grievously sinned, and were

punished, He invites them to hear attentively His assurances of deliverance, and His promise of the richest blessings. Jacob is owned as His "servant," and Israel as chosen for Himself and honoured. He had "formed them from the womb." Their origin as a covenant-people and nation was from His sovereign love and abounding grace. While He guarantees to them seasonable help, he addresses them with peculiar affection and endearment—as objects of His eternal choice and fervent love. "Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jeshurun whom I have chosen." Though they have greatly sinned, they need not fear that He will finally abandon and destroy them. With peculiar tenderness He styles them "Jeshurun"—His "upright, dear people," or, as in the Septuagint version, "Beloved Israel." * Then He declares what He will do in the greatness of His love and tender mercy. He would confer upon them the largest, richest blessings in copious abundance. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." This is the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, when times of revival and refreshing come to the church from the presence of the Lord. This is a blessing the greatest that can be imparted to a people—one in which ministers, and especially parents, have a special, peculiar interest. If children manifest the fruit of early dedication, and the sons of Zion become as "plants grown up in their youth," it is through the outpouring of the Spirit. "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring." (Ver. 3.) Then the happy effect is rapid and luxuriant spiritual growth—abundant increase in vigour and beauty. "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." This promised blessing we should earnestly, constantly, seek for ourselves and

* This name occurs only four times in the Bible—in Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 26; and here it has been taken as a derivative of endearment—a full title of affection.

others in the church, as well for the present as for future generations. What family, congregation, or community can be prosperous and happy without this? The enlargement and spiritual influence of the church are evidently dependent upon the fulfilment of the promise; and it should therefore ever be matter of assured belief and of fervent supplication. Another precious effect of the effusion of the Spirit is a *solemn profession and covenant dedication*—"One shall say, I am the Lord's," &c. The promise contained in these expressive words has been referred to the calling and fulness of the Gentiles, and to proselytes numerous joining themselves to the Lord and His people in times of revival and spiritual blessing. This, however, is susceptible of a wider application, as the certain accomplishment of the Spirit's powerful operation, and the blessed consequences of all genuine spiritual revival. For ourselves, it deeply warns us to lay to heart this precious promise, and to realise and exhibit this spirit of joyful profession and of devoted dedication. We notice—

I. THE SOLEMN PROFESSION MADE.

"ONE SHALL SAY, I AM THE LORD'S." The declaration intimates that numbers will voluntarily and emphatically make the declaration, and that this is to be done constantly in our whole spirit, words, and conduct. Any one, of whatever state and condition, and every one on whom the Spirit is poured out, shall openly and joyfully exclaim, "I am the Lord's."

This is, *first*, the *profession of true religion* made individually, and by numbers in the visible church. The certain effect of the effusion of the Spirit, and the consequence of spiritual growth, are such a solemn, open, full profession. It is made either by Israel revived and quickened, or by others who "come to join themselves to the Lord and His people." The "sons of the stranger," that "take hold of God's covenant, that join themselves to the Lord, to love His name and serve Him," make this

profession. The glory of the future day of enlargement and blessing shall be seen here. "Ten men shall take hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. viii. 23.) The terms of the profession are singularly significant and expressive. They are the utterance of the heart, the declared purpose of the life, the emphatic language of the whole conduct. "To *Jehovah* I belong." "*For Jehovah I am.*" This is the substance of all true profession of religion. Arising from the habitual feeling that we are not, and in no sense should be our own, it proclaims openly, and without reserve, that our persons, spirits, actions, and whole lives belong alone to Jehovah. "One" shall say this. Another and another shall declare it. Great numbers shall yet come and joyfully proclaim it. "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest Himself shall establish her." (Ps. lxxxvii. 5.) Men of every rank, and whatever may have been their previous condition, shall be constrained to avouch themselves to be the Lord's. While this is the profession of the whole believing church collectively, each individual shall make it for himself; and in relation to all the duties and privileges of religion, his willing and joyful declaration will ever be, "I am the Lord's."

This declaration, moreover, implies that the person belongs to Jehovah by *the highest claims, and by every possible right*. He who calls Jacob by his name, says, "Thou art mine; I have chosen thee." The object of Divine favour and choice says in reply, "Lord, I am thine; O save me! I have sought Thy precepts." (Ps. cxix. 94.) Jehovah's claims upon His people's homage and devoted service are the strongest and the fullest. They are His by perfect ownership, and by the right of abundant benevolence. He gave them existence, and formed them after His image. He loved and chose them from all eternity. The Saviour, who undertook to recover them when they were lost, and to bring them to God, recognises the Father's choice as the

basis of His surety-engagement. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me." They were "redeemed to God by His blood." Bought with an unspeakably precious price, they "are not their own." (1 Cor. vi. 20.) They are God's redeemed; "the ransomed of the Lord, that return and come to Zion." Called by the Spirit, they are separated from the world, and brought into the family of God. The day of their awakening and regeneration was their "time of love." In amazing condescension, the Redeemer brings them near to Himself, and owns them as His. "I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." (Ezek. xvi. 8.) By their own personal dedication often renewed, they yield themselves to the Lord. Thus, by sovereign purpose and choice, by love distinguishing and unchangeable, by all that He has done for them in the way of grace and mercy, by all right and every possible claim, we are the Lord's.

Again, this profession implies that he who makes it is *for Jehovah—to be devoted to His service*. "One shall say, For Jehovah I am." Constrained by the love of Christ, we "live not to ourselves," but to the Lord. The language of a true profession, the utterance of the heart feeling the obligation of the Saviour's love, is, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant. I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid." (Ps. cxvi. 15.) To be for Jehovah is to be for His name, to avouch His truth, to be with His people, to profess and maintain His cause, and to be ready to do any work that He appoints. When He calls to any service, we willingly respond to His call. "Here am I, send me." The invitation to God's service requires an entire surrender, and implies mutual, solemn stipulations. "Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee." (Hos. iii. 3.) Like the engagement of the Hebrew bond-servant (Exod. xxi. 1-7), it is a contract of love, a stipulation willingly

made to remain in the Master's house, and to serve Him for ever. If we enter into it, we are pledged to be on His side, and to appear for His cause. We are to stand up for his interests, to labour to promote His glory, and to live for His praise. "*A life of holiness is a life of renewed acts of self-dedication;*"* and the substance of all true self-surrender is centred in the declaration, "For Jehovah I am;" or, in the matter of the excellent Tholuck, "HIM, AND HIM ALONE."

The declaration denotes, in the fullest sense, to be *His wholly and for ever*. The words are put in the most emphatic form, "For Jehovah I." They imply that the person who so speaks is for Him exclusively; for Him and none else; to be and act in nothing otherwise. It is an engagement to serve, to obey His will at all times, and in all places and circumstances. When we voluntarily make it, we are henceforth pledged to suffer patiently all that He appoints; to be willing to live where He directs, die when and how He pleases, lie down in the grave according to His will, as we hope to be raised by His power in the resurrection of the just; to stand in our lot in the end of the days, and to serve and enjoy Him for ever in the world of glory. Taken in its twofold expression, "To Jehovah I belong—For Jehovah I am." this is the most solemn and comprehensive profession. Yet, to the whole extent of its meaning, it is ours if we have been regenerated and are believers in Christ; if we are aright engaged in His service, and are accepted in holy ordinances.

How is such a profession made? The emphatic declaration of the text implies that it is *made publicly*, with the *whole desire and purpose of the heart*. When one feels the value of the soul's salvation, and embraces Christ as offered in the Gospel, giving Himself to Him, he says, "I am the Lord's." Appropriating Him for salvation, he

* Matthew Henry.

declares, "My beloved is Mine, and I am His." As unbelief is dispelled, he delights in embracing the Saviour as his, and in surrendering himself wholly to Him, exclaiming in the language of faith and of fervent affection, "My Lord and my God."

We say this *in prayer*. In the spirit of adoption, "we cry, Abba, Father." This is our way of pleading at the mercy-seat; this our prevailing argument in prayer, "Lord, I am Thine; O save me." "Behold, see, we beseech Thee; we are all Thy people."

In solemn *personal covenanting* we give utterance to such words. The acts of a living faith imply the surrendering of ourselves to the Lord; and this, too, is the spirit of "effectual fervent prayer." In frequent self-dedication we yield ourselves to the Lord, and, by solemn vowing, we engage to be His alone; to love and to serve Him."

Devout *attendance upon holy ordinances* gives utterance to such a profession. We "join ourselves to the Lord; to serve Him, to love the name of the Lord; to be His servants." (Isa. lvi. 6.) In the public assemblies of the sanctuary God's people are owned in the most endeared relation. "Thy Maker is thy husband." "Ye shall be to me a peculiar people, and a kingdom of priests." Exulting in the privilege, they joyfully declare, "This is my Beloved, and this my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." (Song v. 16.) In the *actions* of a life consecrated to God, we proclaim in the most impressive manner that to Jehovah we belong, and for Him alone we are. This is the strong interpretative language of the conduct. A man's spirit and principles are known by his life. His deportment is the clearest exponent of his profession. When we appear on the Lord's side, this is the most marked testimony that we do not live to ourselves, but to Him who died to save us. This is language so plain that all can understand it. True Christians are "*living epistles*," to "be seen and read of all men." From their spirit and actions, it is designed that others should take knowledge

of them, that they have been with Jesus. They are "children of light," and are required to shine, that others, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father in heaven. Thus should they speak constantly in their whole life, and thus should their actions bear testimony after death. "He being dead, yet speaketh." "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

II. CALLING THEMSELVES "BY THE NAME OF JACOB."

"Another" shall so identify himself with Jacob's nation and religion as to assume the same name. Or, omitting the word "himself," which is not expressed in the original, "He shall call in prayer by the name of Jacob."* These views may be so blended as to express community of interest, profession, and privilege, and fellowship in acts of solemn worship.

The name Jacob designates God's people in a *low and despised condition*. The patriarch, subjected to wandering and injury, is the emblem of the believer in his every-day trials, diversified and of long continuance; and is the type of the church afflicted, oppressed, and persecuted. She is spoken of as "worm Jacob;" she is "small," unable of herself to "arise," and having none to help her. She is Zion, forsaken and desolate, that "no man looketh after." Notwithstanding, true converts, with interest and desire, call themselves by this name. When the Spirit is poured out, the members of the church joyfully bear the reproach of Christ's cause, and account it their honour to share in the trials and privations which a faithful profession entails. "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." (Ps. cii. 14.)

Taking the name of Jacob implies *incorporation with God's people*. To wear the same name implies the fullest identity. As when Jacob brought his two sons to his father for a blessing, the aged patriarch said, "They shall

* The Chaldee renders it, "He shall pray in the name of Jacob."

be mine," as are "Reuben and Simeon," so believers, calling themselves by the name of Jacob, are one with the church in the most intimate and endeared fellowship. Their profession that God is theirs implies that His people too are theirs. Like Ruth, forsaking her kindred and native land, they forget their own people and their father's house, and declare—"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." We are "one body," united to the living Head, and are "members one of another." And as a visible society, by full incorporation, we enjoy the same rights and share the same chartered privileges, as we willingly come under obligations to do and suffer all that such fellowship demands.

Calling one's self by Jacob's name is, furthermore, expressive of *strong affection and endeared communion*. The parties in the conjugal relation have the same name, and this indicates the tenderest, exclusive affection. Christ and His church are often designated by a common name. He is "Israel" as she is termed "Christ" mystical. (1 Cor. xii. 12.) This is expressive not only of identity in covenant, in suffering, and glory, but likewise in the strongest, unchangeable love. Our fellowship with the church is in the union of hearts attracted to Christ, and inhabited by the same Spirit. It is the communion of mutual love. Loving Him who begets, we love all that are begotten of Him. The "saints on earth" are "the excellent" in whom is all our "delight." With hearts knit together in love, we have complacency in their company—in their graces, attainments, labours, and privileges. With a spiritual affection which affliction, instead of abating, only strengthens and intensifies, believers have all their rest in the church of Christ. They love the habitation of God's house. As they take the name of Jacob, they joyfully express their delight in Zion—"This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. cxxxii. 14.) "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth

out for the living God." "All my springs are in thee." (Ps. lxxxiv. 2; lxxxvii. 7.)

The assuming of Jacob's name, again, expresses identification with God's people in *lot*, *character*, and *trials*. "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved." (Ps. xlvii. 4.) As Israel of old was God's chosen people, and the portion of their inheritance in Canaan was assigned them by lot, so the elect have their conditions of work, and warfare, and affliction allotted to them in infinite wisdom and love. Jehovah Himself is "the portion of their inheritance and of their cup: He maintains their lot." (Ps. xvi. 5.) Their lot, which is determined in the covenant of peace, amidst its changes, trials, and conflicts, is a lot of privilege and blessing. They are heirs of the promise—of life, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The redeemed have a common lot in prayer, in suffering and affliction, in deliverance and victory. They are partakers of "the common salvation," as they wait for its perfect enjoyment. Their lot on earth is in the covenant, which is "ordered in all things and sure." Yet trials are to be endured along the whole course of it. These are all sent, however, in sovereign love and tender mercy; and, in the end, they "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." (Hob. xii. 11.) Their death and their rest in the grave are at the time appointed; and in the future glory they sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their assigned place in the kingdom of heaven. They put on and display here the character of God's Jacob—that of a people, separate, peculiar, prayerful, and holy. They are a seed of blessing in the earth. "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.)

Lastly, those who call themselves, and who are called by the name of Jacob, seek *the blessings of God's covenant people*. These are diversified, peculiar, and rich beyond measure. As in the prophetic benediction of Isaac, pro-

nounced on Jacob, the "dew of heaven" was placed first, so the Spirit's gracious influences, descending copiously, are quickening, and purifying, and refreshing, and fertilizing. Like the blessing of Joseph, who was separate from his brethren, they are blessings of the heaven and the earth, in all places, of illimitable extent, and of everlasting duration. They comprehend all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. They are enjoyed through Christ, and are shared with Him on earth and in heaven. "The Lord God is a sun and shield. He will give grace and glory; and will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.) In the fullest sense, those who call themselves by the name of Jacob are they who are identified with Jacob in lot and character—share Jacob's portion; and blessings of every kind are theirs for ever. The blessing of Abraham, large and all-comprehensive, pertains to the Gentiles by faith. "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 3.)

III. THE RATIFICATION OF SOLEMN COVENANT-ENGAGEMENTS.

"Another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord." The different declarations of the verse are made according to Hebrew parallelism. The first member, "I am the Lord's," corresponds to the third, "shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord;" and the second, "shall call himself by the name of Jacob," agrees with the fourth, "surname himself by the name of Israel." The expression—subscribing with the hand to Jehovah—has been differently understood. It has been rendered writing or inscribing on his hand, and has been referred to a puncture by writing or staining on the hand, or other parts of the body, indicating authority or ownership; as an idolater is marked with the name or symbol of his god, a slave with the name of his master, a soldier with that of his commander. Thus understood, it implies that the one mon-

tioned *assumes* or *bears* the mark of true devotedness. The early Christians were accustomed, by marking their wrists or arms with the sign of the cross, or the name of Christ, "to declare that they were separated from others, and that they esteemed it their honour and badge of distinction to wear the name of Christ, and to be devoted to His service." The followers of Antichrist are said to have "the mark of the beast on their forehead and right hand," (Rev. xx. 4), indicating that, under his power, they owe him absolute subjection and devoted obedience. The Lamb's company, standing on Mount Zion, have the Father's name inscribed on their foreheads. The name in the most conspicuous place declares their open and full profession. They are children of their heavenly Father, wearing His image, employed about His business, and reflecting His glory. Thus the name on the hand declares that the Lord has upon us the claim of full proprietorship, and that we are wholly consecrated to His service. We are willing to be everywhere thus known and distinguished. We esteem it our highest honour to be servants of the Best of masters. We glory in the Captain of our salvation; and, with His name inscribed upon us, we fight under His standard, yield up our lives to His service, and confide in His sure and all-sufficient help and protection.

This subscription is especially *the token of solemn personal dedication*. The writing is not so much *on* the hand as *with* it. It is the expressive sign of a contract ratified, the token of a compact or covenant solemnly confirmed. Covenants are not regarded as complete till the signature of the contracting parties is attached. There may or may not be the oath of the covenantors, but the signature is essential to give form and validity to the instrument. (See Jer. xxxii. 10, 12, 44.) When the returned captives, in a season of gracious revival, entered into a renewed covenant-engagement, the names of the princes, Levites, and priests were subscribed to the bond. "Because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it, and our princes.

Levites, and priests seal unto it." (Neh. ix. 38.) Thus, too, we "subscribe with our hand" unto Jehovah. Accepting His gracious offer in the Word, we set to our seal that God is true. Taking Him to be our Lord and Master, we yield ourselves wholly to Him, and consent to be His devoted servants. Without reserve, we dedicate ourselves to His service, and, coming under solemn explicit engagements, we cannot hesitate to enter into a personal covenant, or to attest by our sign-manual that we have pledged ourselves by sacred vows to a life of holy obedience. "Thy vows are upon me, O God. I will render praises unto Thee." (Ps. lvi. 12.) "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments." (Ps. cxix. 106.)

This is done in *sealing ordinances*, and through *the quickening of the Spirit*. The subscription with the hand is expressive of the nature of a right profession, and of the mode in which it is fully declared and confirmed. The name is given to God at the time that we separate ourselves from others and join ourselves to the Lord. In sealing ordinances it is publicly enrolled by the voluntary, deliberate act of him who makes the profession. In baptism "our engagement is to be the Lord's." The Lord's Supper is a seal of the new covenant, ratifying to the worthy partakers the enjoyment of its highest privileges. The communion enjoyed in it is that of the nearest fellowship with God and the saints. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 16, 17.) In the Lord's Supper solemn personal covenants are suitably brought forth and ratified. The sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood furnish the most impressive seals and sanctions of acts of self-dedication. It serves a valuable purpose to have explicit federal engagements, whether in writing or otherwise, brought for confirmation to the sacramental feast. The practice of personal and social covenanting would appear to require this. Such

was the practice of the primitive Christians.* This was adopted by our covenanting forefathers in seasons of revival and in times of persecution and severe trial. And this is sanctioned by our venerable Westminster Standards, when they represent the baptismal ordinance as bringing us under an "engagement to be the Lord's."

Subscribing with the hand is designed for a *standing witness*, and to *impress a deep sense of permanent obligation upon ourselves and others*. The written signature remains a testimony to others, for the present and future generations, of our full Scriptural profession, and of entire dedication to the Redeemer's service. It declares that we have enrolled ourselves among the friends of God; that we have opened our mouth to the Lord; and that we are not at liberty to go back. We thereby proclaim to all the paramount claims of our Master, the excellency of His yoke, and that His service is perfect freedom. And when we shall have rested from all earthly labours, and our work in the service of Christ here is ended, the subscription with our hand to the Lord, standing on record, attests our full and hearty engagement. A clause at the conclusion of some forms of personal covenanting has special reference to the influence of such ratification of solemn vows upon future generations:—"God grant, when I am lying in the grave, that others, seeing my signature attached to this transaction, may be thereby led to yield themselves to the Lord in a like solemn engagement."† The subscription deepens the sense of obligation, and supplies a powerful motive to all holy living. It stands as a witness against all lukewarmness and apostacy. The record of former acts of sacred vowing, and of the names of those who made them, speaks loudly encouragement and warning to those who are called to God's service; as our names, appended to sacred engagements,

* See Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trojan.

† See specimens of personal covenanting in Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul."

may, in future time, lead others to make the like devoted surrender. Thus is the work of God in Zion declared "to the generation following." (Ps. xlviii. 13.) "The testimony and law left in Israel are thus made known to children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children." (Ps. lxxviii. 6.) *

IV. SURNAMING ONE'S SELF BY THE NAME OF ISRAEL.

This indicates that *union to God's Israel is regarded as a chief distinction*. Surnames, which were anciently not in use, were introduced either by changing former names or by adding new ones. They were adopted to indicate the closest union, and an eminent distinction and privilege. The name Abram was changed to Abraham by inserting a letter of God's incommunicable name, and declaring the honour conferred upon the patriarch in becoming the "Father of many nations." Instead of the name Jacob—a supplanter, is given that of Israel—a prince of God, as proclaiming the honour conferred of prevailing with God in wrestling prayer. Surnames are the *family* designation. The person who voluntarily assumes the name of Israel declares that he has entered into the family of faith, which in heaven and earth is named after Christ. He esteems this as his highest privilege and most eminent distinction. As Joseph, when in the highest station in Egypt, brought his two sons to Jacob, his father, that they might be called by his name, and regarded this an honour above the highest nobility in Egypt, so the surname of Israel, rightly taken, transcends all earthly honour and distinction.

* Judiciously has it been remarked, "Every professor of religion should remember that his profession has all the force of a solemn compact. He has voluntarily subscribed his name, and enrolled himself among the friends of God. There is no agreement of a more binding nature than that which unites him in public profession in the cause and kingdom of God." — *Barnes*.

This surname imports *special favour and power with God*.

The name Israel was first given when the patriarch had power with God in wrestling with the angel. Instead of the name Jacob, which designates the believer and the church in a low, tried condition, it is indicative of special favour. The name Israel is expressive of conflict and victory. It was less by bodily effort than by conflict of spirit that Jacob overcame. By earnest, wrestling prayer, we, too, prevail with God; by clinging and holding fast, we obtain the blessing. Yet this is wholly through Divine favour, and by strength communicated. As Jacob was made sensible of his weakness before he prevailed, that the blessing might be seen to be wholly of Divine favour, so it is through God's strength that we are made strong, and by His grace that we overcome. The two witnesses are given power from on high. As Israel, in wrestling, we prevail with God for the blessing; and are victorious over enemies. We are, even now, "more than conquerors" through Him that loved us. Of each warrior in the spiritual conflict it may be declared, "By his strength He had power with God. Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed. He wept and made supplication unto Him; He found him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us." (Hos. xii. 4.)

In taking this surname, the person accounts it *most honourable* to be numbered with God's Israel. The original term rendered "surname himself," means to address in a soothing manner—to give an honourable title. "I have surnamed thee," says God to Cyrus, "though thou hast not known Me." (Isa. xlv. 4.) So especially does God make and regard His saints. "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." (Isa. xliii. 4.) We willingly adopt the honourable appellation of Israel. A profession of true religion is in every way honourable; and, in making it, we esteem the saints "the excellent of the earth." When we incorporate with them, we are a "royal priesthood."

Their character and work are dignified and ennobling. To be attendants on the King, to be witnesses for His truth, and servants employed in His work, is the highest distinction to which any can attain. Substantial and lasting honours are put upon those who are numbered with Israel, compared with which all the glory of the world is insignificant and vain. When earthly grandeur and fame, seen in their true light, are unsubstantial and fading, our highest honour is to have fellowship with the humblest of God's people, and to do the least services for the Lord of glory. In the final blissful reward of the righteous, inconceivable honour and felicity are the portion of those who choose affliction with the people of God rather than the pleasures of sin, and that esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." (Heb. xi. 25, 26; Luke xxii. 29, 30.)

Finally—Those who take the surname of Israel yield themselves to do the *work of Israel*, as they *fully inherit his privileges*. They dwell alone in holy separation from the nations. They are witnesses for God's law and truth. They are "a dow of blessing" among many people. They are "a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people." They are selected instruments for establishing the kingdom of truth and righteousness in the earth. Faithful to the trust committed to them, they enjoy privileges the most excellent and valuable. They are a covenant-people—Jacob, "the lot of his inheritance." They are "great" by being ever "near to God" and under His special protection, and encompassed with His favour as a shield. They are preserved as "the apple of His eye," and are esteemed His "peculiar treasure." "The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." A "blessed people" are they "whose God is the Lord." "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency; and thine enemies shall be liars unto thee;

and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Dout. xxxiii. 27-29.)

IN CONCLUSION—

First—The subject suggests matters of *solemn self-trial*. We may ascertain whether we have been renewed by the Spirit, and are subjects of His gracious influences. When He is poured out as water on the dry ground, there is life, increase, and fertility. As the Spirit of truth, and implanting in the heart a living faith, He leads to make a spiritual profession, and to confirm and adorn it by holy and entire dedication. Joining ourselves to the Lord, we willingly incorporate with His people; and esteem it a privilege and honour to bear their character, co-operate with them in their work, and have a common lot with them in suffering and trial. It behoves us to examine whether we have made from the heart such a profession. The whole life should be its exponent. Like a tree planted by the divisions of water, that "bringeth forth fruit in its season, and its leaf will not wither," we should be fruit-bearing and prosperous. If we have never made such a profession, we should seek the Spirit's quickening and reviving influence, and should come and make it now. Recognising God's paramount claims upon us, and all that is ours, we should say from the heart, "To Jehovah I belong. For Jehovah I am." Frequently should we renew our covenant-dedication; and we should search and try ourselves whether we are living to the Lord, and in communion, in work, and trial, and privilege, with His ransomed people. We should constantly lay to heart God's paramount claims, and our manifold obligations to respond to them, and to walk worthy of Him to all well-pleasing. A true profession of religion should be often renewed and confirmed by solemn ratifications and sanctions. This is a principal part of the service in holy sealing ordinances; as we should carefully examine our sacred vows and obligations after their observance.

Fellowship with the Lord and His people is the end, as well as the blessed fruit of the profession to be the Lord's, which is made by the living impulse and plenteous effusion of the Spirit.

Secondly—Our whole *duty and privilege* in attending upon Divine ordinances are here; and here, too, are our *life-work and blessing*. We are not our own; and it is required that to the Lord alone we should live, to glorify and enjoy Him, now and for ever. When called to any spiritual service, we should joyfully respond, "To Jehovah I belong." His claims upon me are absolute; His commands of the weightiest obligation. "For Jehovah I am;" to stand on His side, appear for His cause, and to receive with gratitude and joy the blessings which he confers. We should yield ourselves to the Lord, in holy dedication, and should delight in covenanting—personal and social. If we have declared with our mouth that we are the Lord's, and with our hand we have subscribed the engagement, we should constantly bear in mind the solemnity of the transaction. God is a party and a witness in the matter; and motives, the most weighty and constraining, urge us to walk worthy of this holy vocation. As professed servants of Christ, as covenanted-witnesses, we have much yet to do for the advancement of the glory of the King, and for the salvation of perishing sinners. The standard inscribed, "For Christ's Crown and Covenant," is entrusted to us to "display because of the truth," and to claim the nations all to the Redeemer as His covenanted inheritance. As devoted to the Lord, and pledged to labour and suffer for His name's sake, we have much to do for our native land, for the church in the earth, and for the conversion of the nations. With opportunities precious and passing, with difficulties and dangers surrounding us, with prospects the brightest opening before us, and rewards the most glorious presented for our encouragement, we should realise our dedication, and henceforth live, and labour, and suffer as in no wise our own, but as wholly the Lord's. We

should seek for the church a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, and under its influence press forward to higher spiritual attainments, assured that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not," and that the harvest, when it comes, will abundantly compensate for all our labour, and trials, and privations. It shall be "a hundred fold" more in this life than all we have forsaken for Christ, and in the world to come life eternal.

Finally—Let us give evidence of a true profession, and of a full surrender to God, by taking the *name of Jacob*, and gladly assuming *the surname of Israel*. Yielding ourselves to the Lord, we cannot but declare, as did the Moabitish convert, "Thy people shall be my people." United to the Living Head, we are in unison to all the members of His mystical body, and become in the closest fellowship "members one of another." We are identified with God's Jacob, however small and despised. We have one faith and baptism—are of one heart and Spirit. We make common cause with them in labour, and conflict, and suffering, as we become partakers with them of the same holy privileges. It behoves us to be the instruments by whom Jacob shall arise. Professing leal allegiance to the King, we should employ all our influence at the throne in pleading for deliverance for Jacob. (Ps. xlv. 4); and with joyful hopes we should anticipate the era of future enlargement and blessing. "The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine: also his heavens shall drop down dew." (Deut. xxxiii. 28.) "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.) We should ever account identification with God's true Israel—a separate, prayerful, covenanted-people—as in the highest degree honourable. We should constantly act so as to make the church's profession, fellowship, and ordinances, honoured. The holy lives of the members of the church, and their fruitful walk, form an attractive, subduing power in the world. Others take knowledge

of them that they have been with Jesus. When Zion shall have "put on her beautiful garments," and become "the joy of the earth," kings shall bring their glory, and the nations their riches to her. "Ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. viii. 23.) Thus will God greatly honour them that honour Him. To Israel's covenant-God we commit you, and all your work, relations, and interests, confiding in His assured, faithful promise. "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." (Mic. v. 7.)

THE REDEEMER'S EVER-ENDURING NAME.

PSALM lxxii. 17—"His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed."

THE title of this sublime song, and its conclusion, are both noteworthy and expressive. It is styled, "For Solomon." Some read it "By Solomon," the son and successor of David, and say that he was the inspired penman of it. It is much more likely that the sacred writer was David—"the sweet Psalmist of Israel," and that it was indited by the Holy Spirit as a prayer for blessings upon the person, throne, and kingdom of Solomon; and, at the same time, as a prophecy concerning a monarch more glorious, and a dominion infinitely more illustrious, than that of any earthly ruler, however magnificent. It is added, at the close, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." This expression may indicate the close of one of the books into which the collection of inspired songs was divided. Or if, as is supposed by some, it was the last psalm that David wrote, then it declares the end of David's prayers to be the close of his life-work.

The psalm is throughout joyful and triumphant praise, and is the utterance of fervent desires respecting the cause and kingdom of Christ. It is the outflow of the heart of the sacred writer, enlarged with elevating views of the future "large and great dominion" of Messiah, the Prince. "Let His glory fill the whole earth; let His kingdom be universally established; and I have enough.

I desire no more. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen and Amen."

The psalm is not to be explained as relating partly to Solomon and his peaceful and prosperous administration, and partly to the Messiah and His kingdom established in the earth. Nor is it to be interpreted, as has been frequently done, by regarding Solomon as a type of Christ, and the different expressions as first applicable to the monarch of Israel, but as having their full meaning in the exalted Antitype. A "greater than Solomon" is the grand object of description in every part of this sublime ode. It refers throughout to Messiah the Prince, as even Jewish writers, and all but universal tradition, admit. The lively and lofty expressions of the Psalmist have no proper application to any earthly potentate, even the most mighty, or however extensive and glorious his power, but their force and significance are apparent when they are viewed as spoken concerning Christ Jesus—the King and Head of the Church, the Governor among the nations—and of Him alone. The imagery and modes of expression are, after the manner of ancient prophets, borrowed from the time and reign of Solomon; but, in all other respects, it is the character and glory of Christ that are celebrated throughout this psalm.

In the passage immediately preceding the text, from verso 8, the inspired seer, wrapt in prophetic vision, sees the Redeemer's kingdom far extended and greatly enlarged. Enemies are in prostrate subjection to His sceptre of power. Many willing tributaries do Him homage; and rich and manifold gifts are presented to Him by the rulers and people of different nations. He is greatly beloved and honoured by His faithful subjects. Prayers are offered daily for the establishment and prosperity of His kingdom; and, in grateful praises, He is continually extolled. His benign government is destined to a rapid and wonderful expansion; and, through it, abundant blessings are diffused universally, like the golden fruits of a plentiful

and wide-spread harvest. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." The church, small and unpromising in its beginnings, like seed sown upon the summit of bleak and barren mountains, will hereafter spread abroad, and become prosperous and most productive. Its "fruit shall shake" like the cedars of Lebanon—the evidence of powerful growth and abundant fertility. The imagery is thus varied and very expressive. "They of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." The indications of great spiritual prosperity are everywhere—in the waving fields of the country, and in the crowded city. The denizens of Zion, numerous and vigorous, are rapidly increasing; verdant and lovely as the grass, refreshed by the dew and rains of heaven. Then, as in every way meet, Messiah is Himself exhibited as the source and central glory of all these rich and manifold blessings. From His name—glorious and everlasting—from His high authority and unchanging dominion, there is the amplest security that all these bright predictions will be accomplished, and that at length the whole earth shall be filled with Immanuel's glory. "His name shall be for ever; His name shall propagate itself in the presence of the sun; and men shall be blessed and bless themselves in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." Let us consider—

I. THIS ILLUSTRIOUS NAME.

His name is that by which a person is known and distinguished from others. It is used in Scripture to designate the Person Himself; it is expressive of His attributes, His works, His power and dignity, His particular renown and honour. As applied to the Redeemer, exalted to universal power and authority, it is—

HIS PERSONAL GLORY. His name shall be called "The Mighty God, the Father of eternity." "He is Immanuel, God in our nature; God manifest in the flesh." This name

belongs to no other of the persons of the Godhead, nor to any creature, however exalted. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus"—Jehovah-salvation. This is the foundation of the church, the firm and immovable basis of the whole superstructure of mercy. This Divine name is the grand object of all faith and peace, of all hope and joy. His name, Jehovah—glorious and enduring for ever—presents to us a Saviour mighty to save. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.)

HIS MEDIATORIAL OFFICES AND WORK are, besides, thus designated. His name is inseparable from the amazing plan of human redemption. In the covenant of grace from eternity, He was appointed the Mediator and Surety. He "was set up from everlasting." With willing consent, He engaged His heart to draw near to God. "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth as His portion, and His delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.) His "goings forth" of love and mercy have been "from of old, from everlasting." (Mic. v. 2.) Of the covenant of peace, He was the Head on man's part; and the names of Prophet, Priest, and King of the covenant exclusively belong to Him. These three offices of the Mediator are inseparable; in their execution, He never executes one but in intimate connection with the others. Every glorious name that belongs to the Redeemer is comprehended in them. He is the "Messenger of the covenant," the Light, the Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness. He is the great "High Priest" of our profession, our Propitiation, our constant "Advocate" within the veil, and all-prevailing "Intercessor." He is our Almighty King, the "King of saints," "the Lord of glory." We must know His name, and accept of Him in his threefold offices. Although made known from the beginning, no personal type before His advent exhibited Him in the fulness and combination of His offices. He is now to be seen in the lustre of His finished work as "the Lord our righteousness," "the Captain of our salvation," made

“perfect through sufferings;” the “Author and Finisher” of our faith.

His name declares *His “power and glory” as a Saviour.* All the excellence of Christ’s name is connected with the salvation which He accomplished by His obedience and sufferings. “His glory is great in Thy salvation: honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon Him.” (Ps. xxi. 5.) He is “mighty to save.” He was given “a covenant of the people,” for a light of the Gentiles.” His name and glory are associated with His working for His redeemed spiritual deliverance, and accomplishing every part of their salvation. “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” (Isa. xli. 8.) All power in heaven and earth are given Him, that He may give eternal life to His redeemed. He is “able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him,” and He is willing and ready as He is able to save. His glory consists in beginning, carrying forward, and completing the eternal salvation of the church. He alone builds the temple of the Lord, “and he will eternally bear the glory.” (Zech. vi. 13.) Each saved sinner is a sparkling gem in His many-jewelled crown. He has made to Himself “an everlasting name” by the displays of His power and mercy in behalf of His people. This is the undivided glory of the whole costly contrivance, execution, and application of their salvation. In its progress and completion, the innumerable company of the saved ascribe to Him all the praise. With loud voices they exclaim as they worship, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Rev. vii. 10.) In the completed salvation of the ransomed multitude there is displayed, with surpassing lustre, the glory of the love and grace, of the justice and holiness, of the wisdom and truth of all the persons of the Godhead. “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” (Rev. xxi. 23.)

This name is the *dignity and dominion* to which He is advanced. "God also hath highly exalted Him; and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." (Phil. ii. 9, 10.) This name is the universal sovereign dominion conferred upon Him by the Father, as the reward of His finished work. "All power" is "given Him in heaven and earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) "On His vesture and His thigh is a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Rev. xix. 16.) His delegated dominion is of like extent with His original essential dominion. He is Lord of creation—"the first-born of every creature." All things are put in subjection under His feet, and nothing is left that is not put under Him." He is Lord of angels; "Head of all principality and power;" "Prince of the kings of the earth;" and "Governor among the nations." All creatures in the vast universe, all systems and social organisations, all events in Providence, are under His sovereign control. He has dominion over the invisible world, as to Him pertain "the keys of hell and of death." This sovereign authority of the Mediator is not an empty title or a mere name. He *actually* exercises universal and unlimited dominion. "He is Head over all things to His church, which is His body; the fulness of Him who filleth all and all." (Eph. i. 22.) Throned at the Father's right hand, "He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet." "He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries." (Ps. cx. 6.)

His name is brightly displayed in the *endeared relations* which He sustains to His redeemed. "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments, Thy name is ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love Thee."*

* The original is more expressive than our version- the *as* of comparison not being found in it.

(Song i. 2.) Like costly perfume everywhere diffused, and its attractive fragrance long remaining, is the Saviour as He sustains to His people the most tender relations. He is their Husband, Elder Brother, Shepherd, Physician, and Friend. All these relations are combined in Him. The excellence that is in each separately, and in them all united, is vastly surpassed in Him. When the love and tenderness that exist in all these relations are exhausted, there remains in Him a fulness that is infinite. "He is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." (Job. xi. 13.) How precious and excellent is the name that expresses such dignity and glory, that designates such offices and relations, so fragrant with the tenderest affection! Unchangeable and everlasting as it is, how should it be confided in, loved, and magnified! "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of our Lord God." (Ps. xx. 7.) "I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise Thee for ever and ever." (Ps. xlv. 17.)

II. THE PERPETUAL CONTINUANCE AND INCREASING GLORY OF THIS NAME.

"His name shall be continued as long as the sun." The original word denotes more than mere continuance. It shall "propagate itself," or "bring forth a new progeny; gaining, generation after generation, a new accession of offspring."*

It has in it *essential duration*. All other names are fading and perish. God puts out the names of the wicked, and perished with them is their memorial. (Ps. ix. 5, 6.) Earthly dominion lasts but for a time, and then decays and passes away. Rulers the most potent die like men. Their breath goeth forth: they return to their earth: in that day their thoughts perish. (Ps. lxxxii.

* Before the sun, may His name throw out shoots.—*Delitzsch*.

6, 7; cxlvi. 3, 4.) The dream of earthly glory is vain and unsubstantial. All human renown is evanescent. In Christ and His kingdom is life perpetual and vigorous. His work is undecaying. The name which He has, as a risen and triumphant Saviour, He obtains as the reward of His embittered sufferings and vicarious death. When "His soul has made an offering for sin, He sees His seed, He prolongs His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." (Isa. liii. 10.) "He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." "His seed will I make to endure for ever, and His throne as the days of heaven." (Ps. lxxxix. 29.)

His name excels all that are *put in competition with it*. A name among men is great as it outstrips and eclipses others. So Christ's name, long despised and contemned, shines forth in increasing splendour, while the names of the noble and mighty of the earth fade away and disappear. The ancient gorgeous ritual found its substance in Christ, the great High Priest—the one perfect atoning sacrifice. It was but the star-light, or the radiance of the pale moon, compared with the "Day-spring from on high," or "the Sun of righteousness," rising with salvation under His wings. He is the "Plant of renown," for protection, and safety, and comfort to His people, such as none other can furnish. He is "white and ruddy," "the chiefest," or *Stand-bearer*, "among ten thousand"—more majestic and excellent than myriads of angels, or of the greatest of the sons of men. He is "made better than the angels," having "obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb. i. 4. "The Father has made Him His First-born, higher than the kings of the earth." (Ps. lxxxix. 27.)

He *puts down and survives all enmity and opposition*. According to the purpose of eternal wisdom and love, and as the reward of His obedience to the death, He is exalted to sit at the Father's right hand. (Ps. cx. 1.) "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet." (1 Cor. xv. 25.) Before Zerubbabel, every "great mountain shall

become a plain." (Zech. iv. 6.) The sentence of utter subversion will be executed upon all hostile powers, preparatory to the establishment of the Redeemer's rightful dominion. (Ezek. xxi. 27.) He outlives all His and His people's enemies, as He is exalted to supreme power to bring them down and destroy them. All things shall yet be seen in prostrate subjection put under His feet. The four great world-powers, that rose in succession and supplanted one another, are at length fully broken in pieces and removed. Then is introduced "the kingdom of the mountain"—the Redeemer's powerful and glorious reign, which shall fill the earth, never to be succeeded by any other world-power. "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (Dan. vii. 27.) "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." (Rev. xi. 15.) In the fullest sense, this dominion is characterised by perpetuity and universal submission to its uncontrollable authority, "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Dan. vii. 27.)

His name shall *shine and flourish*, and be *universally known and admired*. It shall be "*continued in the presence of the sun*." There shall yet be bright and glorious manifestations of the preciousness and excellency of the Saviour's name, dispelling the clouds of error and sin, and filling the earth with its glory. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of light. Truth, holiness, peace, and love are its grand constituent elements and characteristics. When they spread and prevail, the evils that afflict the earth are brought down and removed, and instead of them, joy and happiness become ascendant, and are widely realised. The influence of the sun on the lower world is *vitalizing and refreshing*. So Christ's name, when "*continued before the sun*," diffuses spiritual life wherever it is known. Like the "Tree of life" in the midst of the paradise of God, all

connected with it is clothed with verdure, and instinct with vital power. It is ever-green, and its branches wide-spreading. Its leaves are medicinal, and it bears *twelve harvests-fruits*, renewed every month, fully ripe and prosperous. (Rev. xxii. 2.) He is the "Plant of renown," through the dignity and fame given Him by the Father, and the high honour put upon Him by angels and men. When other names, the most renowned once, decay and perish, this continues. And at the close of the dispensation, its glory bursts forth with full splendour: "At evening time it shall be light." "The light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days." (Zech. xiv. 7; Isa. xxx. 26.) Before the glory of this enduring name the brightness of created luminaries pales and disappears. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." (Isa. lx. 19.)

Finally—This name has in itself *the power of extending increase*. It shall "*propagate itself*"—gaining through coming generations a fresh accession of spiritual offspring, and the new progeny constantly reproducing others. "He shall see His seed." The "corn of wheat," sown and apparently dying, becomes the germ of a plentiful harvest. Under the abundant effusion of the Spirit, they spring up luxuriant, as among the grass—as "willows by the water courses." The great principles of the kingdom of Christ thus grow and become reproductive. As the grain of mustard seed, though in itself small, becomes a large and wide-spreading tree, so the name despised is at length "great among the Gentiles." All things connected with this illustrious name are under the law of perpetual growth and increase. The seed of promise are as "the stars innumerable," and as "the sand by the sea shore that cannot be reckoned." Whether we consider the truths which His name makes known, or His spiritual offspring, these become the first-fruits of a glorious and widely-extended harvest.

His name shall "*prosper and be blessed*;" * shall descend with honour to posterity, and increase till the sun shall cease to shine. "They that come of Jacob shall bud and blossom, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. xxvii. 6.)

III. THE BLESSING THAT IS IN AND FROM HIM, AND THE BLESSEDNESS ASCRIBED TO HIM.

The Saviour is not only blessed Himself but is the source of blessing to the nations. He is the fulfilment of bright patriarchal promises. "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xxviii. 14.) "In Him shall they bless themselves, and all people shall felicitate Him." As the happiness of a parent is bound up in that of his children, and the prosperity of a monarch is inseparable from that of his subjects, so the blessing that rests on the Saviour's name contains rich and manifold blessings to all that are His. If the Head is blessed, so is the whole body; so are all the members. Nations only call Messiah, blessed when He is recognised as the Author of their prosperity. All men are made to rejoice in His salvation. His name is revered and loved above every other name—as their mighty Deliverer, and the witness of their most solemn and sacred engagements. "Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness: and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory." (Isa. iv. 2.)

He is pre-eminently the *source and centre* of all blessing. In the fullest sense, the fountain of life is in Christ, and in none other. He brings the blessing to a world lying under the curse. Of His acceptance and exaltation by the Father it is declared, "Thou hast made Him most blessed for ever: Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance." (Ps. xxi. 6.) Through Him the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles by faith. All that was promised to the patriarch and his seed through future

* Felicitatum nomen ejus.

generations is possessed through Christ. Like the benediction of Joseph, the blessings that flow from Christ are those of "heaven above," and of the deep that coucheth under: blessings of the breast and the womb: blessings that prevail in enjoyment above those possessed by progenitors: reaching to the "utmost bound of the everlasting hills, and resting on the head of Him who was separated from His brethren." (Gen. xlix. 25.)

The blessing from Christ is chiefly *spiritual, enjoyed in union to Him*. We are "blessed now with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places or things in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) The Holy Spirit is Himself the grand blessing of the new economy which Christ confers. All saving blessings become ours through the indwelling and operation of the Spirit. Hence we have life, pardon, sanctification, comfort, and the earnest of heavenly bliss. These are spiritual and heavenly in their nature; and we enjoy them when we live and walk in the Spirit. Blessings to the living Head flow forth to all the members; and not only are they to the saints the benefits of the Saviour's purchase, but they partake of them, as co-heirs with Him. "Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth." (Ps. cxv. 15.) "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." (Ps. cxliv. 15.)

It is for men of all *classes and nations*. The blessing through Christ is adapted to the race in general. All need it, and through Him the most unworthy and destitute may come to possess it. The repeated assurance to Abraham was, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed." (Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxviii. 14.) The seed to which the promises were made is "One, even Christ." (Gal. iii. 16.) The blessings procured by Him are for Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female. Whatever was their previous state and character, they are bid welcome to come and receive blessings from Christ; and, in union to Him, they become theirs in sure possession. Nations as such enjoy blessings through the

Gospel and the mediatorial dominion of Christ. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." When the gates of spiritual privilege are opened, that the "righteous nation that keeps the truth may enter," wars cease; idolatry, vice, all that brings the curse upon a people, are done away; and national peace, greatness, and abundant prosperity are realised. The nations are glad, and the people praise God. "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our God, shall bless us." (Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6.)

Those who are *blessed in Christ willingly submit to His gracious dominion*. Kings become wise and kiss the Son. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him." (Ver. 10, 11.) The diadems of princes are laid prostrate at His feet; and the nations bring their riches and glory to Zion. Civil rulers, in their official character, and nations in their national capacity, do homage to the enthroned Mediator, and willingly yield their authority and resources to advance His cause. Kings become "nursing fathers to the church," and "their queens her nursing mothers." (Isa. xlix. 23.) "The isles wait" for the Redeemer's "law." (Isa. xlii. 4.) "The nation and kingdom that will not serve Zion shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." (Isa. lx. 12.)

Nations, in calling Christ blessed, honour and praise Him by *their national acts*. Publicly they acknowledge Him as the Author of all their good—the bountiful bestower of all their prosperity. They own that all national power and blessing are from Christ, by setting up properly-qualified rulers to promote His glory, by enacting laws in accordance with His revealed will, by acts of public thanksgiving, and by national covenanting. The riches and resources of nations are due to Christ, and should be freely dedicated for the advancement of His cause in the earth. This heartfelt and joyful soliciting of Christ will yet take place in all parts of the world, by

men of all ranks and conditions; publicly and privately; in families; in social assemblies, religious and political; and in the whole intercourse and business of life. To the exalted Redeemer every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.)

IN CONCLUSION—

This subject suggests important *uses of self-trial*. Our spiritual state and character are certainly determined by our relation to the Saviour's ever-enduring name. Do we know, love, and honour His blessed name? Have we practically submitted to the Redeemer's authority; and do we delight to call Him Lord, and esteem it our highest honour to be called by His name? The blessings publicly invoked for Israel were conferred in the way of Jehovah's name being named upon them. "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." (Num. vi. 27.) The patriarchs of old had, as the token and pledge of peculiar favour and blessing, their names changed—letters of the Divine name being inserted in theirs, and the new name indicating the blessing conferred. The name Abram became Abraham, as expressive of the promise that he should be the father of many nations. That of Jacob was changed to Israel—a prince with God, to denote his victory in wrestling, and the honour and dignity of his spiritual seed. The *new name* given to the conqueror is inseparable from the enjoyment of the highest privilege, the participation of the hidden manna, a fixed and stable position in the temple of God, and oneness with Jehovah and His church for ever. (Rev. ii. 17; iii. 12.) To bear this name is all their safety, and honour, and salvation. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; into it the righteous run and is safe." "The Lord is a strong-

hold in the day of trouble; blessed are they that trust in Him." (Prov. xviii. 10; Nahum i. 7.) This is the willing confession of the saints, as it is all their confidence and joy: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of our Lord God." (Ps. xx. 7.) To all "that believe, He is precious;" and the attractive fragrance of His name excites their tenderest love and complacential delight. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." (Song i. 3.)

Here is the only way of receiving all blessing. This is the ordained method of blessing from the beginning; and in no other way may any expect to obtain it. In the ever-enduring name of the Mediator and Surety in the covenant men alone are blessed. "There is no salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) We should adore the wisdom and love that laid upon Christ all help for the ruin of the Fall, and the whole burden of the sinner's salvation. We should come to Him now for all that His name and titles import. We should take Him as the Deliverer from wrath, and flee to Him as the Rock of our salvation. Christ Jesus is "made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" and we have the warrant and welcome to embrace Him for all this; as in Him alone should we glory. His name is terrible to the enemies of His people, and we may learn from its greatness and unchangeableness, their guilt and fearful danger. He sits enthroned at the Father's right hand, till all His and His people's enemies are made His footstool. He is the Avenger of blood. In "the day of His wrath, He strikes through kings that withstand Him. He shall fill the places with dead bodies. He shall wound the heads over many countries." (Ps. cx. 5, 6, 7.) We should betake ourselves to His name for safety. We should come to Him as the one Mediator of the Covenant, and receive Him as the Lord our righteousness—our

strength and stay, our peace and blessed hope. In his name shall the Gentiles trust. All that is valuable and endearing in Him as His people's Shepherd, Husband, Elder Brother, and Friend, we may appropriate and claim as our sure portion—our enduring and blessed inheritance.

The grounds of the *fullest and most joyful* confidence are in this ever-enduring name. Christ, the Saviour, is not only the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, but His glory shines forth with lustre ever-increasing. The Gospel is light breaking and spreading continually. The kingdom of Christ is ever enlarging, while world-powers decay and sink to ruin. Earthly kingdoms totter and fall, and are forgotten. That of the Redeemer, founded on principles that are imperishable, lasts throughout all ages, and increases in glory, till it merges into the reign of eternity. The dominions established by mighty conquerors, as Alexander, and Cæsar, and Napoleon—founded in force—have passed away and perished. The dominion of Christ, on the contrary—founded on love—endures for ever. Millions at the present moment yield to Him the entire homage of the heart, and would willingly die for Him. In the ages to come all opposing powers shall be subverted. His cause will be universally triumphant. We should choose our lot and destiny with Him and His people. The trust reposed in His name can never be disappointed. Of our hope in Christ we shall never be ashamed.

Finally—The *great evidence* that we are blessed in Christ is herein presented. Saints, united to Christ and saved by Him, with their lips, and in their hearts and lives, call Him blessed. They bless themselves in Him, as they seek the blessing from Him, and ascribe to Him the praises of its enjoyment. Like as David, on an important occasion, returned from a public service to "bless his house," so we should place our families under the covert of His blood, and seek the blessing by confessing His authority, and by dedicating ourselves and them to His service. In the assemblies of the church we call

upon His name, render Him the praise that is His due, and recognise His authority in pronouncing the benediction. We are called and commanded to do all things to His glory. The church is to seek every blessing—all her comfort, liberty, and joy—from Him as her Redeemer, living Head, and Lord. We are required to confess Him before men, and daily to extol Him. Our duty and privilege alike are to declare His renowned name, and to make known His light and salvation throughout the nations. The name of Jesus, as God's salvation to the ends of the earth, His power and dignity as a Saviour, mighty to save, are to be proclaimed to all nations. This should be the loud voice of the church's confession and testimony, made known for the obedience of faith to all people. This should be the perpetual harmony of the lives of the professed followers of Christ. Labouring and praying for such exalted objects, we should seek to bring others to know, confide in, and love the Saviour's blessed name. As nations become enlightened and are brought to know and honour His name, they are prospered and blessed. In the ages to come, with the knowledge of the Redeemer's name universally diffused, nations submitting to His yoke shall enjoy enlarged prosperity; kingdoms, as such, shall praise Him. The ends of the earth shall fear Him and rejoice in His salvation. Every knee shall bow before Him in prostrate homage, and "every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father." As His name becomes "great among the Gentiles," nations and their rulers honour the Son by placing His name first on their monuments and public records, and by employing national resources for the advancement of His glory in the earth. This is the open attestation of their having received blessing from Him. Thus, too, every believer, as he grows in grace and advances in meetness for the heavenly inheritance, loves more and delights in this blessed name, and seeks that others should love and honour it. The saints in heaven, fully blessed in Him, adore and

praise the Saviour, as the Source and Fountain of all their felicity. Their lofty songs are all vocal in His praise. The crowns of the redeemed are prostrate at His feet; and every palm is waving in His honour. In a song perpetually new, with loudest, sweetest melody, they exclaim in their exalted worship, "Thou—thou alone, O blessed one!—art worthy to take the book, and to unloose the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood; and hast made us kings and priests unto God; and we shall reign upon the earth." (Rev. v. 9, 10.)

THE
BUILDING OF THE CHURCH THE GLORY
OF THE REDEEMER'S REIGN.

ZACHARIAH vi. 13—"Even He shall build the temple of the Lord;
and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His
throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

WHEN Zechariah—one of the "prophets of the restoration"—was commissioned to direct and animate Zerubbabel, prince of the captivity, and Joshua, the high priest, in the work of rebuilding the temple, and thus preparing the way for the advent of the Messiah, the Divine will was communicated to him by a number of significant visions revealed in succession. Of these, eight are recorded, from the beginning of the prophecy to the eighth verse of this sixth chapter. What is contained from the ninth verse to the end of the chapter has been viewed by some expositors as the ninth symbolical vision. Rather is it to be regarded as a real transaction in which the prophet took a part, furnishing the basis of a cheering prophecy, which was designed to encourage the returned captives in their important work, and to gladden the hearts of the faithful with discoveries of the future glory of the office, work, and kingdom of the Redeemer promised.

A delegation from the Jews who remained in Babylon had come to Jerusalem, bearing pecuniary gifts to their brethren, to aid them in their labours, and especially to help forward the building of the temple. These they had deposited in the house of Josiah, the son of Zophaniah, who was probably the treasurer of the sacred offerings contributed for furthering the work. Thither the prophet was directed to repair, to take the silver and the gold, and

to make of them two crowns, and to place them either consecutively or together, as forming a *double crown*, upon the head of Joshua, the high priest.* The action was symbolical and most significant. It was emblematical of the dignity and glory of the Messiah—the future gathering of the outcasts of Israel to Him, and their recognising of Him as their true King, and a Priest for ever upon His throne, made after the order of Melchizedec. No single type was fit to set forth the full glory of Christ. The high priest of Israel, when arrayed in his robes of glory and beauty, had on the mitre above his forehead a plate of gold, with the inscription, “*HOLINESS TO THE LORD*,” but he might not assume the diadem of royalty. The investiture of Joshua with a double crown referred to the priestly and royal dignities combined in the same glorious person of the Messiah; while in reference to His supreme authority and universal rule as Mediator, the one crown which He alone wears is said to flourish upon Him. (Ps. cxxxii. 18.) He is, at the same time, represented as having on his head “many crowns” (Rev. xix. 12), symbolizing the various parts of His mediatorial dominion, and the numerous victories which He has achieved over His people’s enemies. The crown of a “royal priesthood” pertains to Him at all times, as well in His state of lowly abasement, and when His power is contemned, as when His kingdom is flourishing, and appears in bright and surpassing glory.

The inspired interpretation refers the symbolical action immediately to Messiah, the King-Priest of the church. “Behold the Man whose name is the *BRANCH*.” Joshua, the High Priest, was a type of the Saviour to come; and in his coronation there were typified the sacerdotal office and royal dignity with which He is invested. As a branch

* The vision of a *double crown* placed on Joshua’s head at once is favoured by the construction in the original. The plural *crowns* is construed with the singular of the substantive verb.

springing out of the tree, clothed with foliage and laden with fruit, so "He grows up out of His place." His "place" is peculiar, from His supernatural conception and His lowly birth. By His own inherent power, and not by created aid, He lives, grows, and prospers. Under Him there is growth in the church; and, from beginnings small and apparently hopeless, He increases till His shade is everywhere stretched out, and His fruit is abundant and "prosperous" like Lebanon. For the spread of His cause, and the establishment of His kingdom, there is vital energy in Himself. He is "exalted in his own strength."

Pre-eminently is He distinguished by the work in which He is engaged, and which He carries forward to a successful and glorious completion. This is ascribed to Him alone, and by way of peculiar emphasis. "And He shall build the temple of Jehovah. Even He shall build the temple of Jehovah." In building the sacred temple, Joshua was an active, approved instrument. But here are exhibited a more glorious structure and more illustrious Builder. It is the erection of living temples, each one "a habitation of God through the Spirit;" the rearing up of a spiritual house to be filled with His glory, of which the costly materials are the ransomed gathered out of all nations. This is the great work which the exalted Mediator has been carrying on, and which He will conduct to its glorious completion, when time shall be no more. All that is done in the church, which is of any real value, is connected with the Man the Branch, our crowned Prince, building the temple of the Lord. Of the construction, execution, and completion of this structure He will for ever bear the glory; as all who are interested in the work willingly confess that to Him it exclusively and by proper right belongs. His session at the Father's right hand, and His powerful, universal rule, secure the accomplishment of all His wise and gracious designs. The purpose of the everlasting covenant, and the mutual harmony and co-operation of His priestly and kingly

offices, amply guarantee the completion of His undertaking. Here, as on an immovable foundation, rest our confidence and hope of salvation; and hence we gather the joyful assurance of the church's final victory, and of the universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth. "He shall sit and rule upon His throne, and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." May the Holy Spirit take "the things of Christ," and reveal them to us, and enable us to contemplate them by faith, and heartily and joyfully to ascribe to Him all the glory! Relying on His promised guidance and support, I shall consider—

First, The GREAT work which the Man, who is the Branch, performs; *Secondly*, The GLORY which He ever bears; and, *Thirdly*, The exalted dignity which He perpetually sustains, securing the full disclosure of His counsel of peace.

I. THE IMPORTANT WORK WHICH HE PERFORMS.

The greatness of the work, and the glory associated with its performance, are declared by the repetition of the words, "Even He shall build the temple of Jehovah." This occurs not through the error of a transcriber, as is held by some on the authority of the Septuagint, and of some other ancient versions. It is rather put by way of strong emphasis. The chief glory of the reign of Solomon, David's magnificent son, was the building of the temple. So it is pre-eminently Christ's honour to erect a church on earth, of which He is Himself the foundation and chief corner stone, and which He fills with His presence and glory. This He claims as His peculiar prerogative. He is the foundation, strength, unity, and beauty of the building, as He effects its completion, amid the loud hosannas of glorified saints and angels around the throne. This temple is not that which was then building by the restored captives, with devoted labour and high hopes, though its progress and completion was from Him. Nor

is it the most gorgeous of earthly temples or palaces. It is a structure of far more costly and enduring materials, of more wondrous design and execution, and of more distinguishing glory, than human hands have ever reared. This temple of Jehovah is—

1. THE CHURCH OF REDEEMED SINNERS.

The ancient temple symbolised the church of Christ in all ages, in its spiritual character and glory. It was the house of God, founded by His wisdom and power; a dwelling consecrated to His service; the chosen place of accepted worship; the residence of the Divine glory, and a scene of blessing. The church of the redeemed is frequently represented in Scripture as God's "building." Individual saints are a "spiritual house," "living temples," and "habitations of God through the Spirit." The whole church on earth is the *building of mercy*, erected in the earth, and carried forward in all ages, as the chief manifestation of God's glory. "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem." "The Highest Himself shall establish her." (Ps. cxlvii. 2; lxxxvii. 5.) This spiritual temple is seen in its most glorious state in heaven. There the building, which has been carried forward throughout all time, is complete; and the headstone is brought forth with hosannas of "Grace, grace unto it." The church, perfect and triumphant, is the perpetual residence of Jehovah, where is rendered to Him the most exalted service of angels and men, and His glory shines forth in noon-tide effulgence, diffusing blessedness unspeakable and unending among all who are gathered home to heaven. "There is no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Rev. xxi. 22.) Instituted ordinances cease when the substantial glory to which they lead is fully seen and enjoyed. There will be no longer, as here, distinctions of services and times. It is one perpetual Sabbath of rest— one high and uninterrupted communion. In no particular place in heaven is God adored, or His glory specially seen. It is all one great temple, reared in honour of His name;

and spiritual worship is for ever ascending from every part of it, as God delights to dwell among His people, and to bless them with "fulness of joy" for evermore.

2. Of this spiritual temple the Man, whose name is the Branch, *laid the foundation and formed the plan*. The ancient tabernacle and the temple of Solomon were each formed according to a Divine pattern; the one shown on the mount to Moses, and the other by prophetic revelation discovered to David. The most solemn charge was given to Moses respecting the construction—"See that thou make all things according to the pattern." Nothing was left to be formed according to mere human contrivance—nothing to be arranged by human skill. A like earnest concern that all should be conformed to the Divine model was evinced by David when he gave charges concerning the erection of the temple. The plan of the spiritual temple was laid in sovereign wisdom and grace in the everlasting covenant. The church of the redeemed is the master-piece of the Divine workmanship. The counsels of Trinity were engaged about it from all eternity. The Mediator set up before the foundation of the world is the "*Builder and Maker*" of the church—the glorious *Architect* preparing the design, and the *Constructor* to carry it into completion. Subordinate workmen or instruments are not mentioned in the undertaking. They are as nothing, while He is all and in all. Himself is the living, chosen, tried foundation laid in Zion. (Isa. xxviii. 16.) His person, on which the whole superstructure is reared, is transcendently excellent. His Word, that gives existence to the church, is precious. The "twelve foundations" have in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and these excel the most costly jewels of creation. The plan of building the church which was laid in eternity and framed in "the counsel of peace," is carried out by the Mediator in all time. Every object and event throughout the universe is rendered subservient to its development; and in its completion there is made to the principalities and

powers in the heavenly places a revolution of "the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii. 10.)

3. *He prepares and gathers together living stones* in building the temple of the Lord. Upon Christ Himself, the "Living Stone," laid for a foundation, believers, "as living stones,"* are placed, and built up a spiritual house. They were hewn out of the quarry of nature by the power of the Spirit, and are quickened and prepared for their place in the building of mercy. Spiritual life is communicated when they are united to Christ; and they become a habitation of God through the indwelling Spirit. This work has been going forward in all ages unseen and noiseless; as in the erection of Solomon's magnificent temple, the materials were prepared on the distant mountains, and the noise of no tool of the workman was heard on it, as it rose up in silent grandeur—the joy of the land. On the one tried foundation are built "gold, silver, precious stones"—costly metals, which will stand the fiery test that is coming, and reflect glory and honour upon all who are employed in carrying forward the building. This preparation is always progressing, and every movement in human society is contributing to advance it. The gathering together of materials for the spiritual temple, and the compacting of them into one glorious structure, is the special work of the Master Builder, and that in which He is pre-eminently glorified. To the Shiloh, early promised, shall "the gathering of the people be." "He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." (Eph. i. 10.)

4. *By His truth and ordinances, and by the instrumentality of His chosen servants*, He advances the building. Through the saving power of the truth, souls are

* 1 Peter ii. 5. The original epithet is "*living*," and not "*lively*," as in the Authorised Version.

quickened, sanctified, and edified. The whole progress of the spiritual temple hitherto has been through the truth made known, faithfully proclaimed and experienced in its gracious influence. It is connected, too, with ordinances *purely* administered—the appointed means of salvation, the channels of living, transforming influence. The building will be at length completed by the glorious display of Divine truth. The pure administration of Gospel ordinances renders the church the “mountain of holiness.” Through the power of the truth the city is “compactly built together”—all its parts in comely proportion, and the whole structure reflecting the renowned fame of the illustrious Contriver and Builder. Through the instrumentality of servants whom He raises up and qualifies in all ages, He carries forward the upbuilding of the church. He is never at a loss for instruments for the performance of His work. As in Nehemiah's days, He employs at times those who are destitute of human means, who hold in their hands tools of labour and weapons of defence; and, despite of enemies, the work goes on and prospers. Concerned about the desolations of the sanctuary, and encouraging one another, they say, “Arise and let us build, that we be no longer a reproach.” Animated by the spirit of true devotedness, and by the hand of their God upon them, impediments give way, enemies are confounded, and the house is prepared for “the Desire of all nations” to come and fill it with His glory. Whatever instruments are engaged, the Divine Architect is among the builders, encouraging them by His presence, giving effect to their endeavours, and crowning them with His blessing. He has the “plumb line” and measuring reed of truth in His hand, to test every part of the superstructure, remove unhewn stones and untempered mortar, and to see that, when it is finished, all has been conformed to the pattern. The building is completed by the full and glorious display of Divine truth; all its parts are seen in comely proportion,

and Mount Zion appears "beautiful for situation," the city of the mighty King, "the joy of the whole earth." (Ps. xlviii. 2.)

5. By *the grace and power of the Spirit*, the temple is adorned, as Jehovah fills it with His presence and glory. Divine agency is indispensably required for the construction of every part of the building of mercy,—for laying the foundation, and carrying on the work to its completion. No created power is adequate to hew the stones that form the spiritual temple out of the quarry of nature, and endow them with life. The glorious Builder adds stone to stone, by the agency of his Spirit. He will put on the last stone, and crown the building, as he placed upon the foundation the first. "He shall bring forth the Head stone thereof, with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." (Zech. iv. 7.) The whole glory of the work is ascribed to sovereign almighty grace. Nothing of human policy or power is acknowledged as effectual in rearing up the superstructure. The work is altogether performed through God's special favour toward His servants, and by His grace within them. Whether viewed as the work of mercy in the sinner's soul, or as the whole church of God, it is through grace that it is in every part advanced and completed. Here is the sure ground of all our dependence, as it should be the hope of all progress. The hosannas of joyful praise will at length proclaim that to sovereign grace alone is to be ascribed all the glory. The beauty of the building consists in its being of Divine workmanship, and in conformity with the pattern sketched in infinite wisdom, and reflecting the holiness of its glorious Author. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." (Ps. l. 2.) A people made willing in "the day of power," appear in "the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning." When the church is seen in her Millennial beauty, she is a "great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, and her light is like unto a stone most precious, even like a

jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Rev. xxi. 10, 11.) Even while the work is in progress, and amid the desolations of Zion, we may by faith see the church of the future in her spiritual beauty. *Samuel Rutherford*, at the morning-break of the second reformation, speaks of a time of revival as the Redeemer going through the land gathering stones for a new temple, which would be all "sapphires and palace work." Thus should we anticipate with joy the coming glory of the church. The Lord "shall arise and have mercy upon Zion." The approach of her set time of favour is indicated by His servants taking "pleasure in her stones, and favouring the dust thereof." (Ps. cii. 14.) In the Millennial glory the "middle wall of partition" is removed, and Jew and Gentile are both one in Christ. The nations of the saved, and the kings of the earth, bring their riches to Zion. The "name of the city in that day shall be, The Lord is there." (Ezek. xlviii. 35.) The "Desire of all nations" shall crown and fill the house with His glory. His gracious presence in the church, brightly manifested and realised by His people, shall be the true and ever-abiding Shechinah. Jehovah "shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." (Isa. lx. 19.)

II. THE GLORY WHICH HE WILL BEAR.

Christ Jesus alone bears, as He is able to sustain, the glory of the plan and execution of the edifice of mercy. The glory is His, not only of a work completed, but it redounds to Him in the design and at every stage of its progress. We behold it but imperfectly now, as through a glass darkly, but when the work shall have been finished, the glory of the Redeemer in the whole undertaking shall be brightly and wonderfully displayed. "He shall be for a glorious throne to His Father's house. And they shall hang upon Him all the glory of His Father's house." (Isa. xxii. 23, 24.)

This glory He has received, as He is seen fitted to bear

it in His *exaltation to heaven*. By His obedience unto death, He laid the foundation of a redeemed church; and this was itself a glory which could be shared by no creature. With reference to His finished undertaking, He could declare, "Now is the Son of man glorified." "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work that Thou hast given me to do." (John xiii. 31; xvii. 4, 5.) But it is pre-eminently in His ascension to heaven, and His session on His mediatorial throne, that He is seen in the full effulgence of His glory. The glory and honour wherewith He is crowned are not of personal excellence alone, but that of a completed work and all fitness to carry forward His lofty undertaking to its designed and blessed issue. When He ascended on high, as death's Conqueror, leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for the rebellious, the original glory which He had with the Father from before the foundation of the world was resumed in all its bright effulgence. A new and additional glory was given Him in the exaltation of His humanity above all principality and power, and in the full reward conferred on Him. "Having by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." (Phil. ii. 9.) This exaltation exhibits the Redeemer's pre-eminent fitness to carry forward the work of building the temple of Jehovah, and of bearing all the glory. "All power in heaven and earth" has been given Him, that He should "give eternal life to those who are given Him" of the Father. The name above every name which is given He bears; this dignity and authority He exercises, that to Him "every knee should bow" in prostrate homage, and that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 10, 11.)

The glory which He bears is that of *the existence, preservation, and establishment* of His church. He is the "Beginning"—the first originating cause of His church.

In His eternal love and grace the redeemed were chosen. The charter of the church's existence and privileges was laid in the everlasting covenant. To Zion He declares the love of His eternal choice, and His work of power, in gathering a ransomed company in the earth. "Now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." (Isa. xliii. 1.) Not only does He give spiritual life to all the redeemed, He gives also existence to the visible church in any place where it is erected. The heathen were cast out, and a room was prepared for the vine brought from Egypt. Its increase and growth are of Divine agency. "Thou didst cause it to take root, and it filled the land." "The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars." (Ps. lxxx. 9, 10.) The glory of the church's *preservation* in the earth belongs alone to the Divine Founder. She is protected by His arm of power against all enemies, and is safe amidst the greatest dangers. Founded on the rock of salvation, the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. He shall help her, and that right early." (Ps. xlii. 5.) "He is a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her." (Zech. ii. 5.)

The *establishment* of the church in the earth is the work of the enthroned Mediator; and of this He exclusively bears the glory. Mere human establishments—the contrivance of carnal wisdom—that are set up and maintained for worldly ends, are destined to perish; but the church, governed by her Divine Head, who subordinates all things to her interests, will continue to exist and extend, and come to universal ascendancy. Opposing powers He puts down, and great mountains are subverted. "The mountain of the Lord's house is established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." (Isa. ii. 2.) How bright and attractive will

be the light of the church in the day of her future triumph and full establishment! How resplendent the honour of the King in effecting it! "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord buildeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." (Isa. xxx. 26.) "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." (Ps. cii. 16.)

The glory of *all instrumentality*, and the *blessing in ordinances*, belong to the Redeemer. The "government is upon His shoulders;" "He walks amid the golden candlesticks;" and "holds the seven stars in His right hand." He calls and appoints officers in His church, upholds them in His service, and gives efficiency to their administrations. Their work is effective of good, as He is with them, and as He works by them. Utterly insufficient of themselves, their sufficiency is of God. The "treasure is in earthen vessels," that "the excellency of the power" may be of God, and not of man. The "weapons of their warfare" are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Despite of the weakness of instrumentality, or of "the day of small things," there is ground of rejoicing in the progress of the work, and in the sure prospect of its glorious completion. He commands the blessing in ordinances. He is Himself present in them, if they are effective of good. "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. cxxxiii. 3.) The benediction and the glory of the whole dispensation of grace in the church pertain to the Redeemer alone. As it progresses, and in its end and issue, instruments, even the most devoted and approved, are not named, and they claim for themselves none of the glory. Their crowns are willingly thrown prostrate at the feet of their exalted Master. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water," but God alone "giveth the increase." "Not unto

us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." (Ps. cxv. 1.)

The *support, victory, and blessedness* of the saints are the glory of their Saviour. "All His saints are in His hand." "The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." He upholds them with His right hand mightily. Their salvation is of the Lord alone. When weak, they are strong—"strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." "Thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted." (Ps. lxxxix. 17.) The captain of salvation fights all their battles, and achieves for them the victory. They are conquerors, and more than conquerors, through the grace and strength of their Divine Leader. He is at all times their Ebenezer—their stone of help. He who laid the foundation and reared up the building will crown the edifice, and be Himself "the chief corner-stone." When He brings them to heaven He feeds them, and leads them to "living fountains of waters"—the deep and inexhaustible sources of felicity. His glory, seen and enjoyed for ever, will be all their felicity.

Finally—This glory is *willingly and universally* ascribed to Him. He alone is recognised as possessed of all fitness to sustain it. It is given Him of the Father as the reward promised Him in the covenant from eternity, and as merited by His work on earth. The saints on earth and in heaven willingly accord it to Him. He that glorieth learns to glory only in the Lord. For every victory that He wins, and every mercy that they receive, the saints raise joyful hosannas of praise. All true servants of Christ are deeply concerned that the glory of all should be given up to their adored Master. In their work they rest on His strength, and do it in His name. His presence and blessing are to them everything; and when their labours are successful, they cast down their crowns at His feet, and in hallelujahs of gratitude they exclaim, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created

all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. iv. 11.) In the completion of the building of mercy it will be fully seen that the contrivance, execution, and perfection are His. He will bear, as He alone is fit to bear the weight of this glory. The delightful employment of glorified saints and of holy angels for ever is to behold the glory resting on the Head of the church, and with grateful praises to declare the honour of His name. His pre-eminent exaltation and dignity are connected with the building of the church. He is "Head over all things to His church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," (Eph. i. 22); and all things in nature and in the kingdom of providence are made subservient to the church's salvation. While He bears, He "lifts up" the glory above all that accrues to Him from the material works of His hands, and from all His works in providence. It is "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory;" too great for any mere creature, however exalted, to bear, but not too weighty for Jehovah Jesus—Immanuel, to have ascribed to Him by the hosts of holy intelligences for ever.

III. THE OFFICE AND DIGNITY WHICH HE SUSTAINS, SECURING THIS GLORY TO HIM.

The Saviour occupies the seat of supreme power, that He may secure the claim that the glory be given to Him exclusively and for evermore. "*He shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*" In the exalted Mediator the kingly and priestly offices are perpetually combined. He is a King-Priest. To this lofty dignity He is raised, with the oath of Jehovah, because of its vast importance and of its unchangeable nature. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." (Ps. ex. 4.)

He is a *King seated on a glorious throne*. The throne is the symbol of royal dominion. This is willingly ascribed

to Him by Jehovah the Father, and by millions of holy beings throughout the universe. "Of the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." It is given to the Redeemer as the reward of His obedience unto death. His throne is founded in blood; and as His work and sufferings on earth were of boundless merit, so His reward is universal and incontrollable dominion. In the exercise of His regal office, He brings into subjection this revolted province of His universal empire. He gathers out of it a people for Himself. He organises a church in the world, and over-rules and controls all that can affect its existence and condition. He secures the allegiance of a willing people. He brings to final and complete salvation a number that no man can number; and He presides over them for ever, as the Head of vital influence, authority, and power. All things are put under His feet for the church's benefit; and He renders every object and event in the universe subservient to her best interests for time and eternity. The King of saints is the Governor among the nations—the Head of all principality and power, the Lord of glory. He sits and rules upon His throne over these different departments of His mediatorial dominion, that He may effectually build the temple of Jehovah and bear the glory.

His is a *perpetual priesthood*. He is the Great "High Priest of our profession." Having, by His one atoning sacrifice on earth, for ever put away sin, He has entered within the veil; and, arrayed in robes of glory and beauty, He ever lives to make intercession. He stands at the golden altar to plead, and is our all-prevailing Advocate in heaven. His hands never hang down, and upon His breast-plate and shoulders are the names of all His redeemed. Upon His priestly mitre appears conspicuous the inscription, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD;" and the iniquity of the holy things of His people He bears, when He goes into the presence of Jehovah. As on the "robe of the

ophod" of Aaron and his sons the golden bells omitted sweet sounds, and with the pomegranate—the most pleasant fruit—were intermingled, so the voice of our exalted High Priest speaks in heaven and earth in accents of mercy and love, while the fruits of His mediation inseparably accompany His intercession. In the world's evening, at His glorious advent, He will come forth from the most holy place in heaven, and, clothed in robes of majesty, He will lift up His hands and bless the people. As He went away with hands uplifted in the act of blessing, so will He return again, and finish the blessing. His is *an everlasting and unchangeable priesthood*. He abideth a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec. His intercession is ever needed, for securing the continuance and increase of the felicity of the redeemed. Thus the glory which is theirs in the bliss of heaven is ascribed to Him as its Source and over-flowing Fountain.

His royal dignity gives *efficacy and splendour to His priestly ministrations*; and this holds out the highest encouragement to His people. While Christ intercedes, He reigns. He is "a priest upon His throne." His voice, while pleading for His people, is the voice of Jehovah's fellow, and of a sovereign Prince. "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." (John xvii. 24.) He holds in His hand the sceptre, as well as the censor. He has all power to effect that for which He pleads; and there are treasures of unsearchable fulness near His throne, to deal out the supplies that are required for His people. He obtains for them by His intercession all spiritual blessings; and, in the exercise of His regal power and authority, He subdues their enemies, and conducts them through conflicts and trials to their rest in glory. He is cognisant of all their case. He bottles their tears, and collects their sighs and groans in His censor. He advocates their cause against every adversary, presents their persons for acceptance, and perfumes their services with the incense of

His mediation. The Spirit whom He asks, He sends as the enthroned Mediator. He abides with them always as the promised Comforter and Teacher, and as "the Spirit of grace and supplication," to help their infirmities. Thus He sits and rules as a priest upon His throne for ever, ministering to His saints all encouragement and blessing.

All the *counsels of God's love and peace* are thus carried out into full accomplishment. The "*counsel of peace*" has been generally regarded as a designation of the covenant of redemption, framed from eternity; and, it being "*between them both*," has been referred to the Father and the Son, the two high contracting Parties in the covenant. Important and fundamental as is the constitution of the covenant to the church's safety and salvation, this cannot properly be the reference in the declaration of the text. The connection of the passage, and the remoteness of the antecedent, cannot admit of such an interpretation. Rather it declares the union and harmony of the sacerdotal and regal offices of the Mediator in building up the church and carrying into accomplishment the high designs of mercy. By the power of the Saviour's rule, in harmony with his intercession as a priest, the great ends of the Gospel are effected. Reconciliation has been made between God and man, and the things in heaven and earth are united in love, and gathered into one in Christ the Head. Peace is realised in the church; it obtains in the sinner's conscience; and it spreads throughout the world, and is the blessing in death. Through offering His great atoning sacrifice, and making expiation, the foundation of all peace between God and man was laid; and, in virtue of His prevailing intercession, the enmity in the sinner's heart is slain, and he is brought into a league of friendship with God. As a glorious King, He rules in righteousness, grants laws, and executes judgments on the church's enemies. He speaks peace to the heathen, puts down oppression, terminates wars, restrains dis-

turbing elements, and establishes the reign of righteousness and peace throughout the world. Thus the "counsel of peace" between the priestly and kingly offices of the Mediator will last to the end; and, in their harmonious and united execution, they are productive of the most beneficent and glorious results to the universe.

IN CONCLUSION—

This subject suggests matters of *solemn self-trial*. It deeply concerns us to inquire what acquaintance and connection we have with this spiritual building. Are we, indeed, temples of the living God, and "a habitation of God through the Spirit." If we have been united to the living Foundation, and quickened, we are consecrated ones. God dwells in our hearts by faith. We offer spiritual sacrifices continually; and our persons and services are accepted in the Beloved. "Whoso house are we, if we hold fast the beginning and confidence of our hope steadfast unto the end." (Heb. iii. 6.) We should dread lest we have only an outward connection with the temple of Jehovah,—as scaffolding which, if it remained, would mar the beauty of the finished structure, and is to be taken down and thrown aside when the building shall be completed. The work is inward and real if it is abiding. Less than this cannot evidence that we belong to Christ, nor inspire us with a sure hope of future glory. Let us see that Christ Jesus has begun, and is carrying forward, the spiritual building in our souls. If He has, we will readily accord to Him all the praise of what He has wrought; as we will confide in Him to carry on and complete what He has begun, till the day of His glorious appearance.

Again, to the Redeemer should be willingly given *the glory of all that has been done for the church's existence, stability, and full salvation*. The eternal choice of the

church is the fruit of His sovereign grace and love; the glory of the plan, execution, and completion of the building of mercy are His. He earned it by obedience and sufferings unparalleled, and of infinite merit. The Father hath given it to Him as the reward of His finished work, and He alone is adequate to sustain it. It is the part of His people—not less their obligation than their high honour—willingly to ascribe it to Him. We should beware of claiming the least part of it to ourselves, or of giving it to any instrument. He that builds the temple of the Lord is a jealous God, and His glory He will not give to another, nor His praise to graven images. He claims as His high and exclusive prerogative all that is done for the founding, preservation, and establishment, as well as blessing of the church; and this with ready and joyful hearts we should ever give Him. While rejoicing in Zion's good, and delighting in her ordinances and holy privileges, we should present a revenue of praise and glory to her exalted King. "Come into His courts, and bring an offering."

It greatly concerns us to accept of the crowned Mediator *as our glorious King, and as our great High Priest*. In the church, He has the throne of authority in government and in holy ordinances; in the world, He has universal, incontrollable dominion; and, as He reigns in glory, He has upon his head "many crowns," and angels, principalities and powers, are subject unto Him. "The Lord of hosts, and He only, is King of glory." Let us, as our first and highest duty, take Him as our King, to reign in and over us, and to submit in all things to His authority. He is first "King of righteousness" and the "Prince of peace." Only by accepting and submitting to His righteousness can we be partakers of His peace. It behoves us to go into the king, and touch His golden sceptro, that we may obtain pardon and acceptance; and the acts of His royal administration should command our reverent submission, and elicit our devout praise. Zion's

children have the highest reason to be "joyful in their King," for He exercises unlimited power for their good. His dominion is characterised by sovereign wisdom and love, and all His dispensations are in compassion and tender mercy. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne; mercy and truth go before Thy face." (Ps. lxxxix. 14.) Let us repose all our dependence upon the royal priesthood of the Mediator. His sacerdotal and regal functions are in the closest union and relation in the matter of the church's salvation. We do not belong to Him as our Lord and King unless we have come to Him as our Priest, and unless we rest upon His atonement. Nor can we have the benefit of His meritorious sacrifice and intercession, unless we submit the whole heart and life to Him as our King. As we go to His throne, we should accept of Him, and employ all our interest at the throne in pleading for the church. "Thou art my king: command deliverances for Jacob." (Ps. xlv. 1.) Like our covenanted-forefathers, in times of trial and persecution, and when deprived of a faithful ministry, we should offer, as the burden of our prayers, and the expression of our joyful hopes, the petition, "LET KING JESUS REIGN." We should constantly employ Him as our interceding High Priest, while we maintain assured confidence in His kingly authority. The sending forth of the Spirit, the beginning, progress, and completion of our personal salvation, are the fruits of His intercession at the right hand of the Father. None can condemn God's elect, because Christ Jesus "maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 34.) "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.) As our "Advocate with the Father," He is ever ready to take in hand the case that is committed to Him. He pleads the merits of His atoning sacrifice to obtain pardon for the guilty, cleansing for the defiled, and the enjoyment of all blessings, temporal and spiritual, for His people. He has

a compassionate sympathy for all their infirmities and trials. He successfully plods their cause against all enemies, presents their services for acceptance, perfumes them with the fragrance of His mediation, and secures the entrance of His saints into bliss eternal. The plea that is put into His hand never can miscarry; the petition that goes into His censer cannot be refused, or be returned unanswered. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hearth us. And if we know that He hear us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (John v. 14, 15.) Not less sustaining and comforting is the doctrine of the intercession of our Great High Priest in behalf of the church. He is her powerful and over-prevailing Advocate within the veil. He has graven her "upon the palms of His hands, and her walls are continually before Him." (Isa. xlix. 16.) His intercession in behalf of the church is constant, most tender, and effective of manifold benefits and blessings. His priestly work within the veil is the matter of His fixed purpose and surety-engagement. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." (Isa. lxii. 1.) The deliverances that He seeks for His church are wrought by His authority and power as a King. As He sits at the right hand of the Father, He reigns till all His people's enemies become His footstool. The blessings of grace and glory conferred upon His church are drawn forth from the inexhaustible treasures that are beneath His throne. As the redeemed are enriched by them in time and throughout eternity, how much cause have they to exult in the purpose and plan of the everlasting covenant, and in the word of the oath constituting the royal priesthood of the Mediator—"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." (Ps. cx. 4.)

Finally—We should rejoice greatly in the *prospect of God's "counsel of peace" being fully accomplished*, as we should willingly co-operate in the important undertaking. All the priestly work and kingly acts of the Mediator are performed for the execution of the purpose of the covenant. They will assuredly in due time effect reconciliation between God and every sinner that was given to the Saviour to be redeemed. Through His intercession in heaven, and His authority and power as an enthroned prince, He will make wars to cease to the ends of the earth. "He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." (Zech. ix. 10.) "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." (Ps. lxxii. 7.) Under the mediatorial dominion, all things in the material universe, all events and changes in the kingdom of providence, and all that is done for and by the church, are rendered subservient to this blessed consummation. This is the destined and glorious end of the last dispensation—the mission of the Spirit—the times of the gospel. Men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks." "Nation shall not lift sword against nation, nor shall the people learn war any more." "They of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." The power of the Saviour's cross, and the prevalence of His intercession, combined with His sovereign dominion, are fully adequate to effect these blessed results. While we firmly believe the sure word of Christ, it behoves us, by fervent prayer and by devoted effort, to contribute to the establishment of the reign of righteousness and peace in the earth. As the deputies from Babylon brought dedicated money to the temple, so should we help, by our worldly substance and devout prayers, the great work of the subjugation of the world to the sceptre of Messiah the Prince. There may be hindrances to our giving direct personal effort to benevolent designs; and we may not be able to go forth ourselves to distant mission fields. But if

we build in the temple of the Lord, by the faithful performance of all personal and relative duties, we will be owned as approved labourers in the great work of establishing Christ's kingdom in the earth. Our great concern should be—whatever we do or give—to place the crown upon the head of the Man, the Branch; to ascribe to Him the glory of His royal priesthood, and to trust to the execution of His sacerdotal and regal functions for the conversion of all nations. Thus will our prayerful exertions and dedicated offerings be “for a memorial in the temple of the Lord” in future ages. All that we gave to Christ and His cause, with the object of doing Him honour, will remain laid up, to embalm our memories and commend our spirit to future generations. Others, stimulated by our example, shall come from remote lands, and in distant ages, to carry forward the Lord's work in the earth, and to bring the tribute of universal praise to His name. “They that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord.” “I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.” (Ps. xlv. 17.)

COMMITTING TO GOD AND THE WORD OF HIS GRACE THE WAY OF ESTABLISHMENT AND HAPPINESS.

ACTS xx. 32—"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified."

THE words of this text are part of the conclusion of the Apostle Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus, whom he had sent for to Miletus, some forty miles distant, as he was going up to Jerusalem to a scene of suffering and persecution. Throughout, the address reflects strongly the mental and moral characteristics of the venerable Apostle. It is earnest, judicious, and tender; the expression of the warmest affection; and it displays the most heartfelt concern for the fidelity of those who are entrusted with a spiritual office, and for the church's prosperity.

In the spirit of conscious integrity, the Apostle makes solemn appeals to the assembled elders concerning the matter of his preaching; and, in relation to his fidelity and devotedness, he enjoins them to take constant "heed to themselves," and to "all the flock" over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. He admonishes them impressively to watch as they that must render account to God. He warns them of approaching danger, defection, and apostacy, and he enforces the counsel to sleepless vigilance by the most impressive considerations. He then closes the exhortation in the devotional language of the text, "Now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace," &c. As indicative of the deep and overpowering emotions of the Apostle's heart, in this last interview with the representatives of the Ephesian

church, it has been observed that he once, twice, and again, seems about to leave off, when he fails in the attempt, and goes on adding other counsels, and adducing affecting considerations to enforce them. See verses 22, 25, and here. He prolongs the address in the fulness of his heart; and, as if unwilling to bid them farewell, he shrinks from uttering the last words. Foreseeing the numerous dangers to which they and the church were about to be exposed when he would be no longer with them, and when no human wisdom or strength could avail for their safety, he commends them to God's almighty keeping and devoted care, as held out in the word of precious promise. "*Now*," as he was about to leave them, and in view of "grievous wolves" arising among them, and of some, even of themselves, becoming leaders in error and apostacy, he speaks to them with yearning affection: "*I commend you to God.*" The original term implies that he gave them in trust, and committed them as a precious deposit to Him who alone could preserve them in safety. He devolved those who were peculiarly dear to him on the highest guardianship. He handed them over to the God of infinite wisdom and love, and to His word of promise and power, by which He works out the accomplishment of His gracious purpose.

The Apostle's solemn and beautiful action in this instance is every way worthy of our imitation. Like him, we should often commend one another, and the church with which we are connected, to God, and to His true and faithful word. Our meetings in the sanctuary will yield precious fruit, our partings will be loving and profitable, if, in sincerity of heart, we engage in the Divine presence in such mutual commendation. To some of us it may be a final interview and a last opportunity. With such an anticipation, and in the prospect of future trials, conflicts, and dangers, it concerns us to speak and hear in an humble, believing, prayerful spirit. May the blessed Spirit give us now to realise God's gracious presence, to

estimate aright the value of what we entrust to His keeping, and to feel that our only safety and security are here! May we hereafter enjoy the happiness of knowing that this commendation has been accepted, and that our prayers have been graciously heard and answered! We shall consider—

1. THE COMMENDATION TO GOD—HOW IT IS RIGHTLY MADE.

The word expressive of the act is very significant and forcible. It denotes to lodge as a sacred deposit, to give as a precious pledge and jewel to the faithful and tender custody of another. Applied to persons, it means that they are committed to the patronage and protection of a Guardian who is deemed worthy of the trust, and who has ability to execute it faithfully. A like form of expression is used when the Apostle elsewhere declares (2 Tim i. 12), “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him—that which I have given in trust unto Him against that day.”

Those “commended to God,” are, first of all, *committed as a valuable deposit into His hands*. This is the work of tenderest love,—as of parents when parting from the children of their dearest affection. The Saviour did this with the disciples whom He loved. In His last prayer, before His agony in the garden, He resigned them into the hands of His Father, and sought for them Divine keeping. “Holy Father, keep in Thy name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are.” “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John xvii. 11-15.) Thus, too, the servants of Christ entrust their own souls to the keeping of Christ: “Into thy hands I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” (Ps. xxxi. 1.) The act of surrender of the soul to Christ in death made by Stephen, the proto-martyr, when he exclaimed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts vii. 59), expresses suitably the believer’s daily act, as it declares

his confidence and hope in death. To every faithful servant of Christ the church and its interests are unspeakably dear. Those who have been awakened, sanctified, and comforted through his instrumentality are his spiritual children, begotten in the Gospel; and are destined to be his joy and crown at the glorious appearance of Christ. Therefore does he commit them to God in proof of his tender affection toward them, and of his intense concern for their welfare.

They are entrusted to the God of salvation, that He *may take care of their souls and all their interests, and to teach them to rely on Him wholly.* In the view of temptations and dangers manifold, they are given to Him who has power over all elements, who can restrain evil of every kind, and can work for their glorious and complete deliverance. The protection sought is gracious, constant, almighty keeping. (Ps. cxxi. 1-6.) The Divine Guardian is ever present, and always ready to minister needed help. Israel's Watchman neither slumbers nor sleeps. In times of special emergency and trial, it is His glory to interfere speedily for His people's deliverance and safety. His name is "JEHOVAH-JIREH." In the mount of duty and of trial the Lord is seen manifesting His glory in providing and delivering. The saints that are lodged in His hands are preserved from enemies and evils of every kind, and their more minute concerns are objects of His deepest interest. "The hairs of their head are all numbered." He keeps them "as the apple of His eye." Their "walls are continually before Him." We should ever repose the utmost confidence in Him for all provision, guidance, and blessing.

This commendation to God is made *in fervent prayer.* The Apostle Paul is eminently distinguished by his frequent prayers for the churches. "Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy." (Phil. i. 4.) "How unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers." (Rom. i. 9.) These prayers are the outpourings of the heart, which characterise faithful ministers,

godly parents, and all who desire the peace and prosperity of the church of God. The Saviour's ministry on earth was, in all parts of it, the constant utterance of prayer for those whom He came to redeem. As if His whole heart and life found expression in this exercise, He declares in one of the prophetic psalms, "I PRAYER."* (Ps. cix. 4.) Committing His own spirit to the Father. He likewise commends to Him His people and all their interests; and His life in glory is continually occupied with intercession on their behalf. (Heb. vii. 25.) The ministry of the Apostles was eminently characterised by the same spirit of prayer and supplication; and the salutations and conclusions of almost all their inspired letters are the expression of this spirit. The abundant blessing that followed their labours was the fruit of committing their work to the Master whom they served, and of commending to Him, in prayer continually, the church to which they ministered. Such should be our element and the spirit of our work. The frequent commendation to God of ourselves, and of those among whom we labour, brings us within the sphere of blessing. At "the throne of grace" we obtain mercy, and find seasonable grace to help. What in prayer we entrust to Him He will assuredly keep. The answer to believing, wrestling prayer will be returned in showers of blessing.

This commendation is made in the *confidence of faith and hope*. We ask in faith, expecting the blessing. "The blessings which we desire when we pray, believing that we receive them, we shall have them." (Mark xi. 24.) The prayer of faith lays hold of the promise, and pleads, "Lord, do as Thou hast said." He whose name is Faithful cannot deny Himself. "He is not a man that He should lie. Hath He spoken, and will He not do it? Hath He said it, and will He not bring it to pass?" Our prayers are offered in vain if we do not present them in the confidence

* Such is the brief, emphatic expression in the original.

of present expectation. God is infinitely more ready to give than we are to ask of Him. Taking hold of His strength, and appropriating and resting on Divine power, we have the warrant to expect the blessing for ourselves and others. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John v. 14.) Faith honours God by committing souls to Him, and entrusting to His keeping objects of inestimable value; and He honours faith, by being faithful to the trust, and by answering graciously the suppliant's prayer. We are warranted to cherish the fullest persuasion that what we entrust to Him, He will preserve in safety to the day of His future glorious appearance, and then render it back with greatly increased honour and glory.

This surrender is made for the *most weighty reasons*. God, to whom His servants commend the church and its interests, has a *special propriety* in them. He has the interest of a Father in the child of his affections. His claim of possession is absolute and unchangeable. The saints are God's by election, by covenant-arrangement, by redemption and the promise. They are to Him a people of inheritance, and "a peculiar treasure." He keeps them as "the apple of His eye." They are graven on the palms of His hands, and their walls are continually before Him." (Isa. xlix. 16.) Jehovah has therefore a peculiar interest in them. They are inseparably connected with His glory in the world. His care over them is tender and perpetual. We may rest assured that He is ever willing to receive and to keep the objects in which He cherishes so loving and constant an interest.

Those need to be entrusted to God's hand, because of the *numerous and great dangers* to which they are continually exposed. They live in a world of enemies; they suffer from "the strife of tongues," and are exposed to hatred, misrepresentation, and reproach. They are called to suffer

persecution in various forms: to reviling, the despoiling of their goods, and the taking away of their liberty and life. They suffer from numerous evils in their own hearts. Their adversary, the devil, continually goes about as a roaring lion, seeking to devour them. It is meet, therefore, to commend them to Him who can effectually preserve and deliver from enemies and evils of whatever kind. As the Saviour interceded for His disciples, and for all believers, so should we plead for those whom we commit to Him. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (John xvii. 15.)

They are *weak and helpless in themselves*, and therefore they need Divine keeping. Unable to take care of themselves, they have of themselves no defence against enemies. Through the power of corruption within, and of temptation without, they are liable to fall. The holiest man, if left to himself, is no match for the tempter, and may be overcome by the least unsubdued sin in his heart. Yet Satan "dreads a saint upon his knees," for he draws upon the strength of Jehovah, and brings Omnipotence into the field by prayer. Laying hold upon Divine promised strength, we can wrestle successfully with the powers of darkness. We "are able to stand in the evil day." Even in conflict we become "more than conquerors;" and, in the end, we obtain assured victory. Helpless in ourselves, when we are weak, we are yet "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." The God of Hosts is our aid. Worm Jacob becomes "a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth, to thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. The wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind of Divine vengeance shall scatter them." The weak and powerless, thus aided, shall "rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel." (Isa. xli. 15, 16.) They are destined *to future honour and glory*; and it is fit they should be entrusted to Him who

can alone bring them to its full enjoyment. They are "the many sons" to be brought "to glory." Even now, they are a royal diadem in the hand of their God, and a "joy and praise in the earth." Hereafter they shall be "jewels," polished and set in the Redeemer's mediatorial crown; and shall shine forth with peerless lustre in the kingdom of their Father. He to whom they are commended keeps them with a view to the future glory to which they are predestined. His faithfulness is concerned, and His honour pledged, that none of them shall be lost or fall short of the dignity to which they were appointed. The good Shepherd, who died to save them, gives them eternal life. He assures them that they shall never perish, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. (John x. 28.) As He commends them to the Head of the new covenant, he declares, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John x. 28, 29.) The Saviour, one with the Father in nature, and in the purpose of human redemption, to whom the saints are commended, is "able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

II. FOR WHAT OBJECTS THEY ARE COMMENDED TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE.

By the "word of His grace" some understand Christ Himself—the living Personal Word. The clause taken in this sense would mean that the commendation is not only to God, as the covenant-head of the redeemed, but also to Christ and His grace. As the Saviour, in the upper chamber, said in His farewell discourse of consolation, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (John xiv. 1), so here the church is entrusted for preservation, and her future glorification, to the Father and the Son—the two high contracting parties in the covenant. Rather, it is to the Gospel of free grace, the gracious word of promise,

that the saints are commended as the grand means of their preservation—as the source to them of manifold blessing. This is emphatically “the word of His grace,” as it contains and holds forth the infinite favour of God to lost sinners. It is itself the effect of God’s free grace to man, and is the appointed means of implanting grace in the soul. The *Gospel*, to which the church is commended, is the grand declaration of God’s grace and love to sinful men. The salvation which it reveals and brings near is wholly of sovereign free grace. The plan of human redemption, devised from eternity, was laid in grace; its disclosure in time, with the application of all saving blessings, is in gratuitous love and tender mercy. “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. v. 21.) “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii. 7.) The Gospel of Christ not only reveals the fulness of the grace of the covenant, but it brings it near and imparts it to the soul. Embracing the word of salvation, and quickened by its life-giving power, we are brought under the dominion of grace. The word becomes “spirit and life,” and is the engrafted word, received with patience, which is able to save the soul.

Believers are commended to this word, that they may be spiritually *enlightened and sanctified*. The truth in the hand of the Spirit has potent virtue to elevate and transform the moral nature. It is like the dew to refresh and fertilise, and like the fire to transform and purify. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” (Dout. xxxii. 2.) The Gospel is the jubilee sound proclaiming spiritual freedom to the bondsman of sin, and inspiring joy into the hearts of them that know it. Their hearts are “purified by faith” in the word. The Saviour’s prayer is fulfilled—“Sanctify them through or in Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” (John xvii.

17.) The Gospel is the ordained means of conforring all saving light—the light of knowledge, and of comfort and joy. In its reception, “the Day-star”—the pledge that the night is gone, and the harbinger and herald of the approaching day—“arises in the heart.” (2 Pet. i. 19.) Increasing spiritual light, and advancement in sanctification, are the effects of the word of the Saviour’s grace. For such attainments, individuals and churches are commended to it. Thus they “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Thus “the path of the just” becomes as the advancing light, “shining more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. iv. 18.)

The word of God’s grace is a *perfect and unerring rule of conduct*, and to it, as such, the objects of interest and affection are commended. The revealed word is the infallible rule of faith and worship and practice. It is the lamp of heaven shining on the path, and the light provided to direct the steps. Thus young men learn to purify their way; the wanderer and the simple are guided into the way of peace; and all are preserved from the paths of the destroyer. The Gospel is “the royal law of liberty.” Its precepts give life; its promises are the pilgrim’s support and comfort. Living and walking by its light, the difficulties and dangers of the way are surmounted. The feet are “shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.” Wisdom’s ways are found to be “pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” With hearts enlarged, “we run the way of God’s precepts;” “we run and are not weary; we walk and are not faint.” (Ps. cxix. 32; Isa. xl. 31.)

The word of God’s grace is a *shield against enemies and dangers of every kind*. A principal part of “the whole armour of God” is “the shield of faith, whereby we are able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.” (Eph. vi. 16.) These “fiery darts” are the numerous and diversified temptations of Satan and his instruments, directed against the believer from different quarters, pointed against all

the gracious attainments of his spirit, character, and life. Every saint is called to conflict and suffering. The only effectual instrument of defence is the Word of God. Received and believed in the heart, it is potent to blunt and turn aside the shafts of temptation, and to foil the tempter. The Saviour, when tempted in the wilderness, vanquished the adversary when He appealed again and again to the word, by the power of revealed truth, declaring, "Thus it is written." Moses, by the same means, despised the treasures of Egypt, and, as Jewish writers allege, trampled under foot the crown of a kingdom. His eye was steadily fixed upon the bright recompense of reward revealed in the word; and the pleasures of sin, and the riches and glory of an empire, appeared to him insignificant and worthless. Faith in the Gospel has ever been an impenetrable shield against the assaults of enemies—an all-sufficient protection against all dangers. A popish friar, when expressing indignation against the Reformation, said, "We could easily have persuaded the stupid Germans, had it not been for the word which Luther held, and the doctrine of free grace which he preached."

This, moreover, is the effectual *cordial and support in all afflictions and trials*. When the word of His grace is kept, "the Father and the Son come and make their abode in the heart." (John xiv. 18.) Thus, too, the promised Comforter teaches all things, and "brings all things to remembrance, whatsoever Jesus has spoken." (John xiv. 26.) In the fullest, largest sense, may the believer declare, "This Thy Word is my comfort in mine affliction." By it the Spirit's presence and power are felt in calming, enlightening, and elevating the mind, and in filling the heart with joy and peace in believing. "Through comfort and patience of the Scriptures, we have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.) The promise, appropriated and experienced in its saving power, becomes a priceless, inexhaustible treasure. It proves the balm and solace of a wounded spirit, it ministers

strong consolation in sorrow, it gives the assured pledge of victory when in conflict, and is the earnest of future bliss. Through the hopes inspired by the Word, we glory in tribulation; and, looking forward to the blessedness of all promises fulfilled, we rejoice that God's testimonies continue for ever. "Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget Thy precepts: for with them Thou hast quickened me." (Ps. cxix. 92, 93.)

How ample is the ground for joyful confidence and assured hope, in committing to God and the word of His grace the objects of our fervent prayers and endeared affections! The God of salvation hears prayer, and is ever ready to receive those who are commended to Him. He can perform for them all things most perfectly. To His saved ones He stands in all tender and endearing relations. They are commended to a Father to pity them, to a Physician to heal their diseases and pains, to a Husband's tender love and affection, to a Shepherd to lead and guide them till He folds them in glory. It is to the mercy, love, power, and infinite wisdom of a covenant-God that they are entrusted. Through the Gospel of sovereign grace, all Jehovah's merciful character is made known—all His salvation is conferred. His promises, "exceeding great and precious," are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." They were "tried words" to the Surety, when He obeyed and suffered in the room of His people, and they will certainly be accomplished to "the heirs of salvation." Relying on the faithful word of promise, the full treasures of the covenant become theirs. "The Lord God," to whom by the word of His grace they are committed, is "their God for ever and ever." He "is a sun and shield, who will give grace and glory, and withhold no good from them that walk uprightly." "Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11; cxliv. 15.)

III. THE GREAT THINGS EXPECTED TO BE DONE FOR THEM.

Those are briefly but emphatically declared, "Which is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." The reference has been taken to be to "the word of His grace." The Gospel, in the hand of the Spirit, is the means and instrument of increase in holiness and stability, and of bringing to the inheritance of the saints in glory. The blessed result is rather to be ascribed to God Himself, who worketh all in all. The gracious effects of the word are altogether from His presence and power working in and through it; and His is the exclusive and undivided glory. He is ever ready to perform, through His word, all things perfectly. He is able to keep them from falling, to succour them who are tempted, and to save to the uttermost all that will come unto God through Him. (Heb. ii. 18; vii. 25.) His ability is moral; it is that of sovereign right and unchangeable law. "Power belongeth unto God. Also unto Him belongeth mercy." His authority is sovereign and supreme, not only over those who are given Him to keep and bless, but over all that would injure them, or in any wise hinder their salvation. His is, in the fullest sense, willing ability. He welcomes to His bosom of love and arm of power those who betake themselves to His mercy, and that are committed to Him in hope of His salvation. We should rest in the joyful confidence that God is able and willing to keep and bless whatever is, in faith and prayer, commended to Him.

The work designed is *increase in grace and spiritual progress*. He is able to "build them up" as well as to preserve them. Edification is pre-eminently God's work. This is a favourite figure with the Apostle Paul to set forth progress and stability in the Divine life. Christ Jesus is the living foundation laid in Zion, "elect, precious," and the head stone of the corner. Believers, united to Him as living stones, grow up as a holy edifice,

preserving its symmetry, as it rises in height, and "an habitation of God through the Spirit." God perfects as well as quickens. He confirms and strengthens; and, despite of obstacles, and opposition and weakness, He advances the spiritual building, not only of the whole church, but also in the hearts of the saved, till He will bring forth the head stone, with hosannas, "Grace, grace unto it." (Zech. iv. 7.)

He secures *their eternal glorification*. The commendation to God and the word of His grace looks forward to a blessed end. For those entrusted to Him we not only seek security from danger and deliverance from evil, but positive felicity for ever. It is that they may come to the full inheritance of life and salvation, of God and heaven, and may enjoy it in bliss unspeakable throughout eternity. This most comprehensive blessing implies that they are *made heirs*. This is inseparable from their sonship. "If children, then heirs." (Rom. viii. 17.) In scripture phraseology, the inheritance is never said to pertain to servants, but to children of the family. The inheritance is something that is held by no unauthorised or uncertain tenure. It is what we can call our own and enjoy as properly ours. As children of God, all that the Father has, and that the Elder Brother possesses, belongs to us by free gift and by indefensible right. The promised life, glory, heaven, are ours by God's sovereign gift; and, as united to Christ, and wearing His image, we shall enjoy the full inheritance in our perfected nature. "All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.)

This inheritance is to be shared in fellowship *with the saints in glory*. It is "among all them which are sanctified." Those that were separated, consecrated, and made holy ones, are the fellow-heirs. By sanctification of heart and life, they were made meet for the inheritance; and with *all* such, and not a few only, will it hereafter be fully enjoyed. With the saints dispersed through different

countries, and with varied measures of attainment in holiness, we have fellowship now. (1 John i. 3; 1 Cor. x. 16.) We shall be admitted to full communion with perfect saints hereafter. Gathered from many lands, and emerging out of much tribulation, the redeemed have all washed their robes, to make them white in the Lamb's blood. "Without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," they are presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. They meet together in the Father's many mansioned house in heaven; and their bliss is enhanced by the lofty and unending communion which they realise in the immediate presence of God in glory.

For this inheritance they *have an indefeasible title*, as they will at length be instated in its full possession. They were chosen to it from before the foundation of the world. Like ancient Canaan, assigned to Abraham's seed, it is the lot of the inheritance to which they were predestined. It is held out to them in precious promises, which they embrace as the ground of their sure hope. The title to its sure possession is given them in the imputation of the Redeemer's righteousness. This is cleared up by the Spirit's work in sanctification. According as they are filled with joy and peace in believing, they see the land that is far off, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The Saviour's intercession in heaven secures it, that His saints shall at length be with Him where He is, that they may behold His glory. (John xvii. 24.) In the prospect of this blissful possession, they sing with joyful confidence—"Thou shalt guide me with Thy countenance, and afterward receive me to glory." (Ps. lxxiii. 24.)

Sanctification is their meetness for the inheritance, and only *sanctified* ones enjoy it. The inheritance is that of "the saints in light." It is a *joint* one, of which each saint has an assigned portion. It is "*in light*," in contrast to the darkness of their unconverted state, and to their imperfect spiritual illumination while on earth. This light consists in spiritual knowledge, purity, love, and joy. We

are "meetened" for the inheritance by receiving from the Father the adoption of sons. A judicial meetness for it is obtained in justification; a personal meetness becomes ours through progressive growth in holiness—in sanctification. None might enter the inner court of the ancient sanctuary but the priests. So the saints, who are a royal priesthood, are prepared for the heavenly inheritance, and at length admitted to its full enjoyment. This inheritance is ours by a sealed charter that can never be cancelled, and the indwelling Spirit is the seal and earnest of it. Holiness is the element and essence of the heavenly felicity. Into the New Jerusalem "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. xxi. 27.) "His name shall be in their foreheads." (Rev. xxii. 4.) "These have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 16.) He that is able to build them up, He who confers on them now the inheritance in title and reversion, will, without fail, conduct them to its full and glorious possession. He will at last "present them to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." (Eph. v. 27.)

IX CONCLUSION.

It deeply concerns us to be acquainted with the *exercise of commending ourselves and others to God and the word of His grace.* This yielding ourselves to God in voluntary self-surrender is the first act of a living faith. Accepting of Christ as He is presented in the Gospel offer, we give ourselves wholly to Him, and entrust all our interests for time and eternity into His hands. We embrace the promise, and take the word to be the directory of our life—the infallible rule of our faith and practice. Every subsequent act of faith leads to the same unreserved holy dedication. All religious duties—private, social, and

public—are the expressions of this self-surrender. In performing them aright we declare, “Thine we are, and on Thy side, O son of David.” “Lord! I am thine, O save me. I have sought Thy precepts.” (Ps. cxix. 94.) Frequently, at stated times, and on particular occasions, we should thus commend ourselves and others to God, and to the word of His grace. If a “life of holiness is a life of renewed acts of self-dedication to God,” it becomes us, by faith, and in earnest prayer for ourselves, and by intercession for others, to make the full deliberate surrender. What we commend to Him is His own by paramount claim, and by the highest right; and when we recognise His claim and yield to Him what we have from Him, we give Him the glory which is His due, and which He will never give to another.

This commendation to God and the word of His grace is fitted to *impart confidence and abounding spiritual comfort*. God performs for His people all things most perfectly. He cannot deny Himself. His covenant-character, as the God of grace and salvation, is pledged to receive and never to reject any that come to Him, and to keep and bless all that are committed to Him. His new covenant-relations—endearing and unchangeable—guarantee preservation, support, and blessing abundant to all to whom He sustains them. He is a Father, all-loving and compassionate; a Friend, ever faithful; a Husband, Brother, and Shepherd—an everlasting Portion. When all tender relations are exhausted, and the comfort and happiness which they minister have been fully enumerated; as infinitely surpassing them all, “He is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city.” (Hob. xi. 16.) This commendation is the act of committing objects of interest to the special favour and affection of the God of love. It is entrusting them to His gracious providence, and seeking for them the direction, support, and supplies which the providential administration in the hands of their Elder Brother is fitted to furnish. We have the fullest

assurance that this surrender to Israel's watchful keeper will not be in vain; and that the blessings sought will not be withheld. "The Lord redeemeth the souls of His servants." "None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." (Ps. xxxiv. 22; 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. xxxiv. 10.) Commended to Him, He will deliver them from all evil, and save their souls in death. Committed to His eternal blessedness, He will fit them for its enjoyment, welcome them at last to its full possession, and communicate to them transcendent pleasures at His right hand for evermore. The church, committed to God and the word of His grace, He will keep as His "vineyard of red wine, and water it every moment." (Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.) She shall be presented a glorious church; and be brought as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, into the palace of the king, to abide for ever. Individual saints so entrusted, are kept from falling, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and at length "presented faultless before His glory with exceeding joy."

We should *live as ourselves commended to God and the word of His grace*, and as those *who entrust others to the Divine care and keeping*. We should realise God's gracious presence, and live in constant dependence upon His almighty power and all-sufficient grace. Bought with a price, and claimed as His heritage and portion, we are in no sense our own. We are commanded to "trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah there is overlasting strength." Our unspeakable honour is to serve Him; our privilege and happiness to delight ourselves in Him. Our confidence should for ever be in His mercy. What can we possibly want that He is not able and willing to bestow? Our early dedication to God is often the source of grateful trust; and subsequent acts of commendation to

Him, whether of ourselves, or of us by others, will frequently minister strong consolation. "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; Thou art my trust from my youth. By Thee have I been holden up from the womb; thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels; my praise shall be continually of Thee." (Ps. lxxi. 5, 6.) The word of the Saviour's grace is the appointed medium of communicating all the blessings of the covenant to the heirs of salvation. It is alike our duty and privilege to make constant use of it, rely on it with assured confidence, and draw from it all the supplies of grace and strength that we need. "Thy word is settled fast in the heavens; thy faithfulness to all generations." The word is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom; and this should be the ground of all our hope: "My hope is in His word." "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God." (Jer. xv. 16.)

Finally—As commended to God, we should *expect the blessed inheritance, and prepare for its full enjoyment*. He that converts will assuredly build up and establish. He will confirm and make strong what He has wrought for us. Despite of all weakness and unworthiness on our part, and all enmity and opposition from whatever quarter, He will carry forward the building of mercy, till the headstone is brought forth with loud hosannas of "Grace, grace unto it." (Zech. iv. 2.) The God of salvation will bring to the full inheritance in heaven. This is secured in the covenant, and held forth in the word of the promise. God is faithful to perform the federal engagement, and to accomplish fully His word of promise. "Hath He spoken, and will He not bring it to pass?" Let us prepare for entering shortly into the full possession. The inheritance reserved in heaven is for saints only; and in the blissful fellowship of them who are perfectly sanctified. The enjoyment of privilege is inseparably connected with the discharge of duty; and though eternal life is a gift absolutely

free, it is enjoyed alone in the way of devoted obedience. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." By admission to the family, they become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The "Spirit of adoption" within them prepares them for admission to the heavenly inheritance, and is the earnest and seal of its perfect enjoyment. Jesus, the Lord of glory, who is able and willing to confer the inheritance, says, "BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY." Waiting for His coming, and anticipating it with joy, we should confide in His unchangeable love and faithfulness. Yet a little while, and we "shall see His face in righteousness, and be satisfied with His likeness." Heaven with all its glory and blessedness will be ours in everlasting possession. We shall be heirs of the promise, of life, of salvation, of a Three One God for ever.

THE REDEEMER, IN HIS LIFE, DEATH, AND UNIVERSAL LORDSHIP, THE SUPPORT AGAINST ALL FEARS.

REVELATION i. 17, 18—"And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

THE emphatic expressions of this text are the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken to an honoured servant in circumstances of unusual importance and solemnity. They have been re-assuring and joy-inspiring to many of God's saints, when called to arduous duty or to great trials; and not a few, when they have been brought in full view of death, and of an entrance into the eternal world, have derived from them gracious support and strong consolation.

John, the beloved disciple, was, through the cruel mandate of Domitian, an exile in Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. His solitude was cheered and his afflictions alleviated by Divine gracious discoveries, which not only gladdened his heart, but which were designed to be a comforting light to the church in subsequent days of darkness and conflict. He was "in the Spirit," and wrapt in prophetic vision, "on the Lord's day." A voice behind him, as of a trumpet, loud and majestic, was heard proclaiming, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." When he turned to see the voice that spake, he beheld one walking amid the golden candlesticks, in august majesty, invested in royal and sacerdotal robes. The figurative representation exhibits Him possessed of every Divine perfection, and distinguished by all mediatorial attributes. In His right hand were "seven

stars"—the emblem of faithful ministers, brought near to Him, upheld by His power, and showing forth and reflecting His glory. The "sharp two-edged sword," proceeding out of His mouth, indicates the penetrating, discerning power of His word, and its two-fold office to wound and to heal, to convince and to remove corruption. His "countenance"—His personal majesty and glory, with His covenant favour and love—was "as the sun shineth in his strength," resplendent and enlivening. This constitutes an appropriate representation of the incarnate glorified Saviour, displaying Him in attractive lustre, the central glory, from whom everything else, seen in vision by the venerable Apostle, derived its significance and importance. It is not properly a representation of the Saviour as He rose from the dead, and appeared to His disciples before His ascension to heaven. Nor may it have been in all respects an appearance such as was made to chosen disciples and celestial visitants on the mount of transfiguration. It was in accordance with the manifestations granted to eminent saints in the Old Testament, as to Abraham, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel; and while suited to the circumstances and design of the revelation to John, it was such a glorious appearance as He now makes in heaven, and as He will make in the eyes of an astonished universe at His second coming.

The Apostle had familiarly conversed with his loved Master, and had leaned on His bosom when He sat at meat, during His personal ministry on earth. But so altered was He now in external aspect, and so bright and overpowering were the manifestations of His glory, that he "fell at His feet as one dead." The awful splendour of Divine majesty so filled and overpowered the mind; and so deeply conscious was he of creature-distance and unworthiness, that, like Daniel when he saw the visions of God, he fell on his face to the ground,—his "comeliness was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength." (Dan. x. 8.) In condescending love and compassion, the

Saviour laid His right hand upon His servant, and spake to him words of the highest encouragement and of invigorating consolation. In the most suitable terms, He declares to Him His own exalted nature and dignity, the great work which He had already performed on earth, His life in glory, and His universal and irresistible sovereignty and dominion. He is the Lord of life—the First Cause and Last End of all existence; the one perfect atoning Sacrifice—the risen Saviour, reigning and pleading in heaven as a priest upon His throne, and to whom alone pertains the lordship of the invisible world. “He has the keys of hell and of death.”

We may not unsuitably regard the gracious declaration and assurance of this text as spoken to God's people in view of their engaging in a special solemn service; and of looking beyond it to trials and conflicts on earth yet to come; to a dying scene, and to an entrance into the eternal world. These words were singularly adapted, in their first utterance, to the state of mind of the honoured servant of Christ, to whom they were spoken by the living voice of majesty. He was in fear, from the suddenness of the vision; he was overcome by the resplendent glory of the august Personage into whose presence he was brought. And only such an act of condescending kindness by the Saviour, and such words of favour, proclaiming His work, offices, and unchangeable character, could relieve His anxiety and fill him with confidence and joy. The same gracious assurance—conveying to the heart discoveries of the dignity and suitableness of the Saviour—is wonderfully adapted to our frame of mind and spiritual condition when under trial and in fear and perplexity. Some even of God's sealed ones may be called to the mount of duty and privilege under misgivings and disquieting fears. Some may be forecasting evils in the world yet to be encountered; and others, through fear of death, may be frequently subject to bondage. Better is it to be in any of those states of mind, however uncomfortable and distressing,

than to be found formal and presumptuous. God, in these last days, speaks to us by His Son. The Saviour is still in His written word, and in the Gospel of His grace preached, as when He was seen walking amid the golden candlesticks, and heard speaking, as with the voice of a trumpet on earth. If the blessed Spirit will this day reveal Christ to the soul, and speak those gracious words individually to our hearts, we will assuredly rise above discouraging fears, and will greatly rejoice in God's salvation. May He whose office it is to glorify the ascended Saviour, and to take the things that are His and reveal them to the soul, come in power with the word, to enlighten, comfort, and seal to the day of redemption!

I. THE GROUNDS OF FEAR, AND THE GRACIOUS PROVISION
FOR DISPELLING IT,

May be first briefly noticed. The state of mind of the Apostle, overpowered as he was with holy awe, arose from a sense of the great distance between a God of infinite majesty and finite creatures. This even holy angels and glorified saints feel, and express in their acts of solemn worship. (Isa. vi. 3; Rev. xv. 4.) A sense of sin, moreover, which nearness to God discovers in its utter vileness and demerit, may occasion prostration both of mind and body. This first utterance of the exalted Saviour—"Fear not," &c., was therefore peculiarly seasonable and supporting, dispelling the Apostle's dread, stilling the perturbation of his mind, imparting renewed strength, and, above all, inspiring full confidence in the precious discoveries of His character and fitness, which the subsequent announcements so forcibly expressed.

The Saviour's address may be regarded as bidding away diversified fears, and as warranting full trust in His offices and salvation by *persons in different conditions and circumstances*. *Slavish fears* characterise the unregenerated and ungodly. These have "the spirit of bondage again to fear"—the spirit of the slave who dreads and hates his

master, and who trembles at the thought of being called to give an account of his service, and of receiving the reward of his unfaithfulness. When conscience is awakened, and God's judgments are revealed against all unrighteousness of men, the wicked feel that they have need to be afraid. "Fearfulness" at times will "surprise the hypocrites in Zion." All that are unregenerate and disobedient have reason to fear. Far from God, they are out of the way of peace. God is angry with the wicked every day. The judgment to come holds forth tribulation and wrath to every soul of man that doeth evil; and the retributions of a lost eternity present unutterable terrors to those who obey not the Gospel. Yet even to such the gracious command of the text may be taken as addressed. A way has been revealed in which sinners of every kind may be delivered from the objects of guilty fear. An ark of safety has been provided, by which, when "warned with fear," as was Noah, we are welcome to come for deliverance and salvation. The call of the Gospel warrants sinners of the deepest dye to flee from the wrath to come. In Christ Jesus—the ordained Hiding Place—the guilty are pardoned, the lost recovered, and terrors of whatever kind are completely vanquished. The gracious declaration of the God of salvation to the sinner is, "Fury is not in me;" "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." (Isa. xxvii. 1, 5.) Embracing the gracious offer, and coming to God through Christ, the believer is delivered from discouraging dread, and obtains peace; "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Ps. xxxiv. 4.)

Fears are sometimes *greatly afflictive and distressing* on various grounds, even to God's own people. This command, addressed to an eminent servant of Christ, is often spoken to other tried believers. Fears, distressing and overcoming, and sometimes of long continuance, arise from a *sense of sin*. These are intensified when sin is seen as set in the brightness of God's sight, and when it is con-

sidered in its manifold aggravations, in connection with multiplied privileges and solemn vows, often forgotten and broken. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." (Ps. xc. 8.) "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." (Ps. li. 4.) Sin brought to remembrance causes fear. We see it in the light of the Divine holiness, and it appears defiling and ruinous. "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" *Particular* sins, as unbelief, pride of heart, formality, and hypocrisy, inspire dread of the Divine displeasure. Idolatry is that "abominable thing" which God hates. A defiled heart and conscience, backsliding, and unfruitfulness, when duly felt, excite disquieting fears. A sense of "blood-guiltiness" oppresses the awakened sinner. The confession of the true penitent is, "My many and great transgressions are gone up above my head, and are become as a weighty burden." "In my bones there is no rest for sin that I have done." Under convictions, the awakened sinner fears that God will call to account for broken vows, and will visit for secret faults and open transgressions. He dreads the rejection of his best services, and destruction from the hand of the Almighty. "Who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts?" "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" (Ps. l. 16.)

There are at times, to believers, *distressing fears of death*, and dread of the judgment to come. In the finished work of the Saviour deliverance is provided for them who "through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hob. ii. 15.) In the earnest pleadings of saints, not unfrequently do they cry, "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxxx. 3; cxliii. 2.) On many other grounds, the children of the

covenant are at times tried with perplexing doubts and overcoming fears. Not a few feel that they need to make the confession of the Apostle and his fellow-labourers—"Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." (2 Cor. vii. 5.)

These fears, when *excessive, are evil and mischievous*. They are often excited and increased through the temptations of the evil one, who is full of enmity against God and His servants, and who knows how to assail *them* on their weak parts. They arise from ignorance and from mistaken views of Christ and His salvation. Distressed believers think that He is absent or turned to be their enemy, as the disciples in the storm at sea knew not their Deliverer when He was at hand, and "cried out for fear." Such fears, when excessive, mar profitable hearing, and prevent the reception of the Gospel message. They hinder fellowship with Christ. Believers, when giving way to discouraging fears, call in question the truth of the promise, and disbelieve it. As the Israelites distrusted Moses, when he announced to them deliverance, because of their hard bondage, and, through unbelief, murmured in the wilderness; as the Apostles, through fear, believed not the report of the women about Christ's resurrection, so undue fears still generate unbelief, and lead to many consequent transgressions. Prevailing fears *unfit for solemn duties*. The Apostle fell at the Saviour's feet as dead when he was overcome with dismay. He was aroused out of this unsuitable state, when he was addressed, "Fear not," and when he was directed to record in a book the things which he had seen and heard, and to send it to the churches. So Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," was raised up, and made to stand upon his feet, and, with his fears rebuked, to receive and report the visions of God. He was bid "Go thy way, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. xii. 13.) Our constant and present duty is to dismiss undue fears,—to

betake ourselves cheerfully to the hardest service, in the confidence that He who enjoins it to us will uphold and bear us through, and grant us the desired issue. Thus approved servants of God—such as Nehemiah and Paul, Luther, Knox, Calvin, and Renwick—have arisen above the fears that assailed them, and by faith, strong in the Lord, have overcome enemies, and triumphed in God's salvation.

The loving Redeemer *notices His people's fears*, and frequently *speaks to reprove them and bid them away*. It is observable that many of the most precious promises and sweetest assurances which are spoken to the saints begin with the words "Fear not." (Isa. xli. 10, 13, 14.) This is the Saviour's voice spoken to relieve their distresses, deliver them from enemies, strengthen them in weakness and trial, and animate them with the hope of final salvation. When they are tossed on the waves of trouble, and are in dread through danger, the Saviour draws near and says, "It is I; be not afraid." When His people are weak and helpless, and their enemies are numerous and mighty, He guarantees to them seasonable and all-sufficient help: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel." (Isa. xli. 14.) And when they have dark forebodings for the future in life and death, He assures them of His gracious presence and of ultimate deliverance, as He did to Jacob in the visions of the night at Beersheba: "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with thee, and I will also bring thee up again." (Gen. xlv. 4.)

In a two-fold way, the compassionate Saviour, who notices His people's fears, is wont to relieve them. First, He "*laid His right hand*" on the Apostle to raise him up and strengthen him, and He then *addressed to him the voice of words*, saying unto him, "Fear not." Thus does He still effectually raise above discouragements, and strengthen and deliver. His right hand is His gracious power. This

He lays on in kindness and condescension—not in the way of external contact, but by imparting increased strength. As the angel touched Daniel, set him on his feet, and strengthened him, so the Saviour revives by communicating internal strength. This He imparts before He speaks to the heart words of strong consolation. Thus His people are enabled to go with increased vigour on their way rejoicing. Secondly, By His gracious word, *He bids away their fears*. His is the word of a King, in which there is power. When He speaks with authority, the stormy elements subside at His command, enemies and objects of fear are restrained and brought down, the tumults of thought and passion within are stilled, and peace and joy fill the heart.

The ends that follow are a bright and full discovery of Himself in His person, offices, work, and unchangeable character. Spoken to the heart by the Spirit, and apprehended by faith, they supply a potent remedy for anxieties and distresses of every kind. Thus all fears, from whatever quarter they may assail us, are silenced; and believers, raised above them, have substantial grounds of spiritual consolation and joyful hope.

II. THAT WE MAY OVERCOME FEAR, THE SAVIOUR IS HELD OUT TO US AS "THE FIRST AND THE LAST," THE LIVING AND LIFE-GIVING ONE.

In the opening discoveries of this vision, He proclaimed His pre-eminent dignity and glory—ver. 8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord." The redoubling of the synonymous terms denotes the sum of existence—the whole thing comprehended. They declare His *eternal and unchangeable nature*. Jehovah Himself thus proclaims His self-existence and eternal duration: "I the Lord, the first and with the last," Isa. xlv. 6; "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God." (Isa. xlviii. 12.) The enthroned Mediator is

the eternal Son of God. Before the foundation of the world was laid, before the measures of time began, He existed as a person in the Godhead. He is "the Father of eternity."* He was "set up from everlasting," and He will be when time shall be no longer. Of creation He is the First Cause. He is "the Beginning," the "First-born of every creature." He is likewise "*the last*"—existing unchanged throughout eternity, and the last end of creation. "Before me there is no God, and there shall be none after me." Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Through all past ages, He was to His church the first—her Head of life, and honour, and joy. He is now all her life and salvation. Throughout all that is yet to come, He will be the last, to uphold, and comfort, and bless. He will be the crown and substance of the felicity of the saints for ever. How effectual is such a remedy against foars of every kind! The Saviour has lived through all the past, and will live through all that is to come. He can therefore accomplish all His promises, and execute all His purposes. He can deliver His people from all evils, and fulfil their largest expectations.

In the whole *scheme of human redemption*, and of *all the believer's privileges*, Jesus is the first and the last. In the grand matter of man's salvation, the Saviour can declare, "I am the first, because from Me all things are; I am the last, because to Me all things return."† He is Head in the new covenant on the part of the redeemed. He was the *first elect*, the object of the Father's eternal choice; and sinners, that they might be saved, were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Of the spiritual temple He is the Head-stone of the Corner, the whole strength, unity, and beauty of the building being dependant upon Him. He is, moreover, the last end of

* So should be rendered the expression in Isaiah ix. 6, rendered in our version "Everlasting Father."

† Richard of St. Victor.

the whole gracious contrivance. "He shall build the temple of the Lord," and shall eternally "bear the glory." "All things were created *by* Him," as the First Cause, "and *for* Him," as the completion and glory of the whole scheme. All the *privileges* of the redeemed emanate from Christ, and lead to rest and complacency in Him. The saints are begotten in Christ Jesus to a living hope. He is the Foundation—"the way, and the truth, and the life." Eternal life is begun in Him. "He that hath the Son hath life." He preserves, increases, and perfects the life which He at first implants. Pardon, peace, sanctification, and spiritual joy come from Christ as the First Cause and Fountain-spring; and the end of these high privileges is to conduct to glorious fellowship with Christ for ever. The "crown of righteousness" is conferred by "the Lord, the righteous Judge," in the day of His second coming. The "river of the water of life," from which the ransomed of the Lord drink draughts of immortal bliss, issues from beneath "the throne of God and the Lamb." Christ is Himself "the Tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God," to which all the redeemed are gathered, to sit under its health-imparting and refreshing shade, and to eat of its ripened fruit, continually renewed for ever.

The grand remedy against fear of every kind is found in trust in *the Saviour, the first and the last*. His Godhead is the all-sufficient ground of assured confidence and blessed hope. With a creature-Saviour as the object of our trust, there would always remain matter of fear; since he is finite, his power and mercy are limited, and himself liable to change. But with a Saviour truly Divine, the sinner has no possible ground to fear, either on account of his sins, or because of enemies, however numerous or powerful. Nothing is "too hard for the Almighty." With God nothing is impossible. To meet every case of weakness or dismay, He speaks the highest encouragement when He says, "Fear not, for I am with thee: be not

dismayed; for I am thy God." (Isa. xli. 10.) He engaged as His people's Surety from all eternity; and He is given "a covenant of the people," all the love, and grace, and fulness of the covenant being in Him. His blood is of infinite value. His love is everlasting and unchangeable. His righteousness, the ground of the sinner's pardon and acceptance, is Divine. He is "the Author and Finisher of our faith." He that "begins a good work" in the soul will finish it. (Phil. i. 6.) He that loved His saints from the beginning with a sovereign, gratuitous affection, will love them to the end. The Lord their Redeemer is the Last, when they are called out of life, to deliver them from all enemies and fears, and to receive them to the bliss of eternity. "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." (2 Tim. iv. 18.)

He is, besides, the LIVING AND LIFE-GIVING ONE. The expression, "I am He that liveth," which properly belongs to verse 17, is stronger than in our version, "*I am the Living One.*" As when Job gave utterance to strong confidence, and the storm and tempest of his soul subsided, said, "I know that my Redeemer is the Living One," so did the Saviour reveal Himself to the exile of Patmos, and so does He speak to us, to allay and banish our fears. The declaration can be made by none save God, and it proclaims Him who makes it as truly Divine. He is the life which was with the Father, and was "manifested to us." (1 John i. 2.) "This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John v. 20.) He is "the fountain" of all life, natural, spiritual, and eternal. As the Father has life in Himself—underived, independent, and all-sufficient, so has the Son in its original and exhaustless source. He quickens whom He will. All the life, of whatever kind, that is in creatures, is as streams issuing from this unfathomable fountain. Amid the decay, and death, and dissolution of created objects, He

continues the same, and his years fail not—the Ever-living One.*

As Mediator, He is, in the fullest sense, the *life* of his people, and *He lives for them*. It is given to the Saviour “to have life in Himself,” that he may confer eternal life on as many as God hath given Him. (John v. 26.) This plainly declares His eternal power and Godhead. In no proper sense could it be given Him to have life in Himself if He were not “the true God, and eternal life.” That which was given Him in the eternal covenant was mediatorial life, that He might impart it to the objects of His Surety-undertaking. Christ is His people’s life. It is “hid with Christ in God;” kept for secrecy, and concealed in its source, and spirit, and ends from others, to be gloriously manifested at His future appearance. The life which He imparts He will preserve, and give it more abundantly. It is “in Himself,” and secured by the pledge of His own immortality. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” This is the believer’s joy, and his triumph over all enemies and fears. “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” &c. (Job xix. 25.) He lives to reign and plead for me. In a changeful, dying world, where friends and comforts decay, and I myself am fading flesh, my joy is that my Redeemer never changes, and is the Life-giving and sustaining One. He lives as the basis of all my happiness; and when the streams of creature-comforts run low and fail, He continues for ever, the never-failing source of being and blessedness. What ground can there possibly be for fears with the believer united and resting on this Living One? The perfect cure for disquieting and disheartening fear is firm faith in the Godhead of the Saviour, and appropriating Him as our living and life-giving Redeemer.

* “To Him belongs *absolute* being, contrasted with the creatures’ *relative* being. Others may share: He only hath *immortality*, being in *essence*, not by *participation*, *immortal*.” —*Theodoret*.

III. HIS DEATH AND PRESENT GLORIOUS LIFE.

"And was dead." The original is more significant and expressive—"And I became dead." "I that was and am the Living One—the way, the truth, and the life—yet became dead." This plainly identifies Him as the crucified Saviour; to none else is the declaration applicable. It represents Him dying as a *Substitute and Sacrifice*. He was God over all—the Beginning, the Eternal Life. He assumed our nature, and took flesh and blood, that He might be in a condition to suffer and die. From all eternity, He became Surety for the lost. In fulfilment of his covenant-engagement, He assumed our obligation and guilt, and was on earth the sin-bearer. He was "made under the law," as a broken covenant; and He obeyed it in our room and stead. He willingly endured death under the curse, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law. He was "set forth to be a propitiation." It "behoved Him to be made in all things like unto His brethren," as He voluntarily assumed their place in law, and came to suffer in their stead. By His "one sacrifice, He for ever put away sin."

The ransom for the guilty and lost *was fully paid in His death, and the payment was accepted*. "He came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx. 28.) The debt which we owed to Divine justice was a debt of punishment which we could never discharge. It was our forfeited life, which neither we nor any creature could redeem. The ransom was paid in the coined gold of heaven. It was given in the precious, sinless life of the Surety, instead of that of the guilty sinner. All the demands of law and justice were fully met in the atonement made by the Redeemer. He died the death of deaths for His people, that they might be redeemed from going down to the pit, and live in glory for ever. The ransom paid for their forfeited life has been fully accepted. "The Lord is well pleased for His righte-

ousness' sake. He hath magnified the law, and made it honourable." (Isa. xlii. 21.) In view of the substitutionary suffering of Him that became dead, what ground is there for fear of death, or of the curse? God, reconciled by the death of His Son, proclaims concerning the guilty—"Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." Receiving the atonement, we may exclaim in triumph, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

He now *lives in glory Himself, and for them for evermore.* With special emphasis, as concentrating thought and affection, he declares, "Behold, I am living into the ages of ages." It intimates that the Saviour who died once shall die no more. He is no longer susceptible of suffering or sorrow. Death hath no more power over Him. As the Mediator exalted to glory, He lives for the consolation of His people. For them He sits at the Father's right hand, and reigns supreme over the universe; for them, as a priest upon His throne, He ever lives to make intercession. He that spoke to reassure the fainting Apostle has the same tender, affectionate interest in His people that He displayed when He was "the man of sorrows" on earth. In all their afflictions, He is afflicted! He has "a fellow-feeling for their infirmities; for He was in all points tempted like as they are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) From the present glory of the Redeemer we are assured of all blessing. We have life in the risen Saviour. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10.) He is "the blessed and only Potentate, who only hath immortality." He lives evermore to accomplish His promises, to fulfil all His purposes of love and mercy, and to glorify with Himself those who were given Him by the Father. When their friends and comforts die, Jesus still lives. When they themselves pass through death's dark vale, the living

Shepherd is with them, so that they need fear no evil. To the end of time, and throughout eternal ages, He sits upon the throne, securing the deliverance of His saints from death, and their fellowship with Him in glory.

This assurance elicits the cordial *Amen* of Christ and His saints. The Saviour is Himself the Amen, "the faithful and true witness." To give the fullest pledge of His resurrection glory, and of the interest of His people in His exaltation, He confirms the declaration by one of His illustrious titles. This strong affirmation bespeaks His ardent affection to His saints. Repeatedly throughout this chapter believers set to their seal to the truths which declare their spiritual privileges, and proclaim the Mediator's dignity and excellency. This is done in verses 6th and 7th; and here, when the living Head of the Church is beheld enthroned in glory, and the life of His saints is seen bound up with Him, the believing heart joyfully embraces the blessed truth, and cordially says, Amen. "Let it thus be! I believe and hope in His word." "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen." (Ps. lxxii. 19.)

IV. HIS UNIVERSAL DOMINION.

The last ground of relief from fear and of comfort is the sovereign, extensive authority which He owns and administers. "*And have the keys of death and Hades.*"* The Saviour suffered death, being one with His people: He now possesses the infinite fulness of life in glory; and through Him is opened the gate of the resurrection to life eternal. As Mediator, He is possessed of *supreme universal* authority. The "keys" are the symbol of official dignity and power. (Isa. xxii. 22.) In the fullest sense, the Mediator possesses absolute and uncontrollable authority. "All power in heaven and earth" is given Him. He is

* So the words are found in MSS.—A. B. C.

"Head of all principality and power." "All things are put under His feet," and there is nothing in the vast range of created being or of providential arrangement that is not put under Him.

His dominion is especially over the *state of disembodied spirits, and the invisible world*. Hades, the under-world, the abode of separate spirits, is a part of the territory of the Prince of life, and is placed in subjection to His authority. He is Lord of the invisible world. Devils are obedient to His word; and the damned in misery feel and confess His power and awful justice. Unsinning angels surround His throne, and are ministering spirits that joyfully own His power, and execute His commands. The departed souls of His saints go, not to a state of unconscious inaction, nor to dwell in darkness and confusion. They are received to be with their living Lord in paradise. Absent from the body, they pass immediately into His glorious presence. They enter into the joy of the Lord, and their bodies are laid in the perfumed chamber of which He carries the keys, and which He opens and shuts at His pleasure.

The Saviour's *power and authority* are felt in actual exercise in both departments of the invisible world. In heaven He is the Lord of glory. He has the key of supreme sovereignty, as He sits at the Father's right hand, and must reign till all enemies existing anywhere throughout the universe shall have been made His footstool. His it is to minister an entrance abundant to His overlasting kingdom. He distributes the crowns of the redeemed. He apportions their lot in glory. He presides over the service of the upper sanctuary, and rules in His Father's house. His saints are exalted to reign with Him; and when their bodies shall have been raised and fashioned like His glorious body, they shall, as overcomers, sit with Him on His throne, as He has overcome and is set down with His Father on His throne. In hell Christ's power and authority are felt by fallen angels and lost human

spirits. He bears the keys of the prison of despair, and consigns the unbelieving and disobedient to deserved punishment. He is there in His almighty power and awful justice. Impenitent sinners are made to feel how "fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God." Against the damned the gate of mercy is shut for ever, and they are enclosed by adamantine bars in endless misery.

The Saviour's dominion over the invisible state *is fitted to minister strong consolation to God's people*. It is a chief remedy for the fear of death and the dread of the unseen world. Death is already conquered by the Prince of life, and its sting removed. The risen Redeemer has sovereign authority, which He ever maintains over the regions of the dead. The graves of the saints are opened and closed by Him. Faith beholds in them "the place where the Lord lay." Their bodies rest in their beds, and sleep in Jesus, as in a prepared and perfumed chamber, till, at the resurrection morn, God will bring them with Him. The prison of torment is completely shut against the saints. For them the gate of bliss is opened; and when they go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage, "the door is shut," that they go no more out, and that they may behold His glory, and enjoy the most endeared fellowship with Him for ever. As the Saviour, invested with this high sovereignty, ever lives and maintains perpetually His dominion over the regions of the dead and the whole world of spirits, those who trust in Him have nothing to dread in life, or in entering the world unseen. Ever should they rejoice in His powerful and extensive dominion.

IN CONCLUSION.

It mainly concerns God's servants to *hear the voice of the Beloved, and to receive Him* as He is offered. JESUS is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He who appeared to the Apostle in Patmos, in the bright manifesta-

tion of His mediatorial glory, is over ready to lay upon His servants His gracious, powerful hand, to raise them up when they are cast down, to strengthen them in weakness, and to give them all consolation. In their greatest troubles and distresses, He speaks to their hearts the message of comfort and joy—"It is I; be not afraid." The presence of Christ is sufficient to bring down enemies, dispel dark clouds, allay the swollen billows of trouble, and hush into quiet the tumult within. He is able and willing to relieve His people from all fears. As He speaks in precious promises, and displays the glory of His grace and compassion, He brings near covenant help. With His outstretched mighty arm He raises up and strengthens; and instead of dismay and perplexity, the heart is made joyful in His salvation. Our first and chief duty is to hear His loving voice, and to appropriate Him in His gracious revealed character. Thus may we commune with our hearts, and reason down discouragements: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God" (Ps. xlii. 11.) Thus may we joy and triumph in present deliverance and safety: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvii. 1.)

Let us embrace Christ as the *first and the last*, the *Living and Life-giving One*. The warrant for faith, and the ground of freedom from fears of every kind, and of all consolation, are here. It is God and not man that speaks. It is not a stranger nor an enemy, nor one that stands aloof in trial, nor that is terrible to destroy. It is, believer! thy covenant-God and Father, Friend and Portion. Before the world was, He undertook His people's case, and became Surety for their help and salvation. Throughout all time He exists unchanged and unchangeable, and will continue the Rock of Ages, when the world shall have come to an end.

He who was the first in the plan, purchase, and application of redemption, is the last in its finishing in time, and in its completed glory in eternity. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." (Isa. xxvi. 3.) What need we dread, if we lean on His arm of power, and rest on His bosom of love? He that begins a "good work" in us will assuredly "finish it." He, our loving Guido, who took us by the hand to lead us into the way of peace, will conduct us quite through, till He receives us to glory. The pillar of cloud and fire that beamed upon Israel's first steps out of Egypt, will go before us in all the march through the wilderness, and throw its last rays upon the parted Jordan, lighting us into the land of promise. Enough for us that Christ is all our hope, and that our life for time and eternity is so hid in Him, that no perils or dangers can injuriously affect us, and no enemies can hurt or destroy us. United to Him as our Head, His exalted life in heaven is the immovable bliss and sure pledge of ours. We have all life in a risen Saviour. Even now we are "complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power." (Col. ii. 10.) We are immortal till His good work in us is performed, and till all that was allotted for us to do for His glory on earth is finished. For our upholding and deliverance now, it is enough that He says, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut. xxxiii. 27.) Yet a little while, and fully seeing Him, we shall be perfectly like Him. "When He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

We should draw all support and joy from the Saviour's death, and from His exaltation in glory.

The Living One assumed human nature, that He might suffer and die. His death was a substitution for the guilty and perishing, and was an atoning sacrifice. He paid the ransom-price, and for ever put away the sins of His people. While having assumed their place in law,

He suffered, the Just One for the unjust. He "became dead," that they might be freed from death, and might live unto God. By His death He satisfied the law and justice of God, "brought in an overlasting righteousness," and opened the kingdom of heaven to all that believe. We should look upon Him whom we have pierced and mourn. The nature, design, and fruits of Christ's death are the great objects of faith and hope; and these furnish incentives to true repentance, and the grand motives to all holy living. Redeemed from the curse by the Saviour's death, and bought with an inestimable price, we live unto God. All enemies are conquered, and unspeakable and everlasting benefits are purchased. From the Rock smitten there flow plentiful and never-failing waters of life and salvation. Because the Surety died, His ransomed people shall never perish. Death to them has been "swallowed up in victory." At whatever time, and in whatever way, they are called to encounter the last enemy, it is to lead them to sure and glorious triumph. The sting has been taken away from the destroyer; and from the fear, as well as the power of death, they are set free for ever. He who died once "lives for evermore," to open the way to life for His ransomed ones, to receive them to glory, and, beyond the region of sin and sorrow, to share with them perfect and endless bliss.

Finally—The consideration of the Saviour's *sovereign and universal dominion* is fitted to minister *strong consolation and sweetest joys* to the hearts of the saints. He has the keys of death and of hell. Enemies that assail them, of whatever kind, have been already conquered, and are under His restraint and control. He has supreme dominion over the invisible world. The grave is within the territories of the Captain of salvation; and the place and state into which disembodied spirits enter at death are under His sovereign sway. Fears that beset the saints in life, and that not unfrequently threaten to overpower them towards its close, are

excited from the view of death, the conflict with the powers of darkness, and the prospect of entering the eternal state. A spiritual discovery of our Lord's universal dominion is an effectual remedy against all these, and is fitted to minister the strongest support and consolation. The enthroned Redeemer has the keys of both departments of the invisible world, and reigns supreme over all in both. He presides over the saints' death-struggle, and receives the departing spirit to Himself. He has "destroyed him that has the power of death." He divides the Jordan when the ransomed pass over. Against them the pit of despair is for ever closed. The gate of bliss is open to receive their ransomed spirits. The grave is prepared for their bodies as a bed of rest; and, at His second coming, the Conqueror of death will unlock the chamber where they slept in Josus, and raise them up, glorious and incorruptible. In such a view of the dignity and extensive dominion of the Redeemer, what possible ground is there for fears? Death is conquered and unstinged. Evil spirits are constrained to own the enthroned Mediator as their sovereign. They may not disobey His commands, or exceed his commission. Hell and death are His servants, that go not on their own errands, but on His. With such a glorious Lord for their king and friend, and knowing that all throughout the visible universe and all in the invisible state is placed in subjection to Him, the saints should rise superior to all fears; and, rejoicing continually in His salvation, they should ascribe to Him all power, dominion, and glory for ever. In the prospect of death and dissolution, we should seek to have in exercise a strong, appropriating faith. Like the good *Samuel Rutherford*, we should give like utterance to confidence in the living and life-giving Redeemer—"I am a sinful and miserable man; but I stand at the best pass at which ever a sinful man stood—Christ is mine, and I am His;" and then, when the last sands of life were ebbing low, he exclaimed, "There is glory, glory in Immanuel's land." Resting on the Saviour's finished

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work, and clinging to His almighty power and unchanging love, we may now use the dying words of another servant of Christ—

“ In age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a helpless worm redeem ?
Jesus, my only hope Thou art ;
Strength of my failing flesh and heart ;
O let me catch a smile from Thee,
And drop into eternity ? ”

—CHARLES WESLEY.

CONFIDENCE AND SAFETY IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH-SHADE.

PSALM xxiii. 4—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

This beautiful and most expressive *Song of the flock*, is, in the opening verses, as it is in the close, one of joyous experience and delightful hope. The believer, appropriating Christ Jesus as his Shepherd, exults in His manifested presence, and in the full and blessed provision which He had made for all his wants. In pictures the most vivid and lovely, taken from natural scenery—repose in verdant pastures, and loading by waters of quietness—there are set forth the peace, order, rest, and pleasurable enjoyment of the sheep under the Shepherd's care. Each one of the ransomed company is an object of constant and endearing interest to Him who purchased him with His blood, and who undertook to bring him to glory. He re-animates him when faint and weary, and refreshes and restores the soul again with Divine consolations. And tender and unerring guidance, preserves from fatal error and ruin, while it displays the glory of infinite wisdom and power. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

The scene suddenly changes. Instead of sunshine and a landscape full of plenty and beauty, we are brought to solitude and darkness, and fear in the way. The paths of righteousness, in which the Shepherd leads His ransomed flock, conduct down to the valley of the shadow of death. This lies on the way to the heavenly rest, and cannot be avoided by selecting another route, or turning into bye-

paths. A single lone traveller is represented as entering the valley. Thick clouds and dense darkness close him in on every side. There are enemies and pit-falls in the way, and objects of fear and dread are around and before. Yet, confiding in his Leader, he enters the scene undismayed, and walks through the valley in safety. His steps slide not, nor do his feet stumble. Fears are overcome, and in due time he emerges out of it into light, and liberty, and glorious triumph.

The assurance contained in the text deeply concerns each one of us. In view of future troubles, we should earnestly seek to know the ground on which it rests, and to make it our own. The cloudy valley is a part of the way in which the Divine Shepherd leads all the flock that He saves, and ultimately folds in glory. Through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom. If we are to reach the fold on the "Delectable Mountains" in glory, we must traverse the wilderness, pass through scenes of trouble, and, at the close of earthly wanderings, enter the gate of death. In anticipation of such experience, it intimately concerns us to consider seriously the ground of our confidence and hope. Before we are called to pass through scenes yet untried, we should seek to know the shepherd's character and care, and so to rely on His faithful leading, as to have full confidence in Him for the future. If He is indeed ours, and we are His; if He has already made us to repose in the green pastures, refreshed and restored our souls, and led us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, we may trust that, by almighty grace and His promised presence, we shall yet be enabled to say in triumph, "Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." It is the language of anticipated experience and certain hope. The traveller, clinging close to the guide ever worthy to be trusted, speaks of steps not yet tried, but which he knows he will one day be called to take, and, in view of them, avows himself free from alarm and superior to fear

and danger. "Also when I walk into or through the valley of the shadow of death," &c. Even in such an extremity, when removed from scenes of former enjoyment, and left apparently alone and forsaken, when fears are in the way, and thickest dangers surround, I have a strong ground of confidence on which I can rest, that it will not and cannot fail me. "I will not fear evil, for Thou wilt be with me; thy rod and thy staff they will comfort me." We shall consider—

I. THE CONDITION—THE "VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH," AND WALKING THROUGH IT.

The term that declares the *condition* is singularly expressive. In the original, it is one compound word, *Zalmuth*—death-shade, descriptive of the thickest, most profound darkness. It is more vivid and significant than the phrase in our version—"the shadow of death." In the various places in which it occurs throughout the Scriptures, as frequently in the book of Job (iii. 5; x. 21; xii. 22; xvi. 16; xxiv. 17), it is used to depict aggravated and overwhelming calamity; in the Psalms, to represent the depressed and helpless condition of the church (Ps. xliv. 19), and the state of the afflicted and rebellious (cvii. 10); and in the prophecies, to depict the wilderness through which Israel journeyed (Jer. ii. 6); the national judgments sent to punish apostacy and covenant-breaking (xiii. 16), and the state of misery and oppression from which Jehovah rescues His people. (Amos v. 8.) "Death-shade" is a state silent, gloomy, and of overwhelming darkness. Then it is a "valley" caused by disturbing forces, and the convulsion of nature, like a gorge enclosed by mountains with overhanging cliffs, beneath which beasts of the night lodge and dangers lurk unseen. The "valley of death-shade" is not, as some say, a mere shadow, without substance or reality.* On the contrary,

* Matthew Henry.

it intensifies the idea of death. It is *death-darkness*,—the thickest, most impenetrable gloom, with the superadded idea of loneliness and terror on every side surrounding.

The figurative expression is representative of diversified *trouble, pain, and affliction*. It is applied to the public afflictions sent upon the church through God's displeasure. "Thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with death-shade." Job, in his heavy affliction, sets forth the judgments of God inflicted upon the wicked by the same expressive imagery—"For the morning is to them even as death-shade: if one knows them, they are in the terrors of death-shade." (Job xxiv. 17.) Affliction is the common lot of fallen humanity. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." The troubles of the righteous especially are many and diversified. They may be *personal*—in disease and pain of body, in outward losses and disappointments, in severe suffering and distress of mind. Accumulated troubles often press upon the sufferer, and, while under them, if God hides His face from them, they walk in darkness, and have no light. They are come into deep waters. All God's waves and billows go over them. Their soul is cast down and disquieted in them. Besides manifold personal afflictions, believers are affected deeply by *relative* trials; they share in the afflictions of others, and in the troubles of the church.* They weep as they "remember Zion;" and, in the way of cordial sympathy, they bear the burden of fellow-sufferers, and are partakers of the afflictions of brethren. The shadow of great trouble is often upon their spirit—at times long-continued, and settling down to a deeper gloom. The Master, who was Himself the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," assures them that "in the world

* Luther says of a time of darkness and perplexity to the Reformers, "We were in the valley of death-shade when we were at Augsburg."

they shall have tribulation," whoever else may be exempted. Their endurance of affliction is a condition of their future inheritance of glory. "Through much tribulation we shall inherit the kingdom." "The joyful morning of bliss succeeds the night of weeping."

What believers *suffer in and from the world* is to them at times the valley of death-shade. Redeemed from a present evil world, and separated from it, they must calculate on encountering its enmity, and on being exposed to opposition and conflicts. It is the wilderness, and not their rest. Privations, losses, and wants are the lot of those who travel through it to the heavenly country. The customs of the world are ensnaring. Its objects, pursuits, and pleasures are the baits of Satan's temptations. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. The servants of Christ may be called to suffer losses in secular business, and to be involved in outward straits and difficulties, or to be afflicted by the pressure of such evils on those who are peculiarly dear to them. Then many suffer in their reputation and influence; and it greatly adds to their distress, and the darkness becomes more dense, as they apprehend that the cause of Christ will suffer through them, and religion will be reproached for their sake. When diversified troubles from the world assail the Christian, and a sense of weakness and loneliness overpowers the spirit, he is forced at times to cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesceh, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" (Ps. cxx. 5.) "Oh! that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." (Ps. lv. 6.) Enough is it to silence these conflicts, and relieve the fainting spirit, that the Shepherd assures His flock of peace in Him, amid the world's tribulation. He calls them to "consider Him that endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest they be wearied and faint in their minds." And to mitigate the trial, and lift them above it, He adds, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." (Heb. xii. 3, 4.) Even when called to suffer

the worst that the enmity of the world can inflict—when passing through the deepest shades, and at the midnight hour, there is no cause to distrust the Good Shepherd. We have no need to tremble at a passing cloud, or to shrink in dismay from dangers that are overcome, and enemies already vanquished. Like the prophet, when outward supports are removed, and we are called to sit down on a melancholy heap of all creature-enjoyments, we should “rejoice in the Lord,” and “our soul should be joyful in the God of salvation.” (Hab. iii. 18.)

Disheartening fears and nervous weakness often bring into darkness and distrust. The valley of death-shade is not unfrequently in our own minds and spirits. From constitutional temperament, some are peculiarly liable to mental depression. God hides His face from His servants, and they are troubled. Their evidences are beclouded, their faith is weak, and, through the risings of indwelling corruption, and the buffetings of the adversary, they are burdened in spirit. They walk in darkness and have no light. Perplexing fears assail them in the dark. Through sinful misgivings, they write “bitter things against themselves.” They conclude that God has forsaken them; and, foreboding final desertion and ruin, they apprehend that they shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy. Occasionally, gleams of light from heaven dispel the clouds, and eradicate this mental gloom. But there are cases, such as Cowper’s, when the thick darkness remains to the close, and only when the valley is fully traversed, and the spirit has passed from the body, does it merge into joyful light.

Bereavement and death are known to not a few as this dark valley. Parting with endeared friends at the grave has tried the spirits of many, and brings with it indeed a depressing sense of loneliness and desolation. “Lover and friend Thou hast put far from me; and mine acquaintance into darkness.” In the crisis of some solemn bereavement joy departs—all objects around appear in sable gloom; prospects once bright are blighted, and the future is

wrapped in a dense cloud of sorrow and sadness. Then death not unfrequently appears in prospect as "the king of terrors." Even when it is otherwise, and the sting of death has been removed, clouds will arise and hover around the valley of death. The lion comes up from the swellings of Jordan. The troubles of life often accumulate towards the close, when the flesh and heart wax faint, and when failing strength is unable to meet them. Dangers appear to thicken around; the light that shone upon the path of the traveller becomes sensibly diminished. The last steps of the valley are to be trodden without any earthly companion—the open gate of death is to be entered alone. There rise waves, too, when, like Christian in Bunyan's allegory, the head of the dying saint sinks for a time beneath the stream. Such, in varied form, is the valley of death-shade. We cannot tell, and you may not certainly know beforehand, in which of these aspects it will present itself to you; but that in one or other of these you will enter and pass through it, is certain. May you now consider aright how you may walk through it, and what will be the ground of your safety and deliverance! We notice—

I. THE WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY.

There are various views which tend to allay the fears and sorrows of the travellers, and to assure them of safety and deliverance. Their course is not fleeing, or stumbling, but *walking*. It is activity and steady progress.

First—It is a part of the leading in *the paths of righteousness*. The Shepherd of the flock guides into it; but His design is that none of the sheep should be lost, and that their passage through this part of the way should contribute to their ultimate felicity. The path of the redeemed lies at times through deep and dismal shades. The Shepherd Himself knows the heavy pressure of manifold afflictions, and was

a lone sufferer, when the billows of wrath rolled over His soul, and He was enveloped in the thickest darkness. The Captain of salvation, who was "made perfect through sufferings," leads all the flock in the same way. Still it is the path of safety, and it conducts to bright regions beyond. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." (Ps. cxvii. 4-7.)

Again, there are some *now of God's saints travelling in different parts of the valley*. Like afflictions befall brethren that are in the world. Some are in the depths of trouble—personal, arising from the world, or suffering in sympathy with endeared relatives. There are servants of God who suffer much with and for the church. Some are under darkness and distress of mind; others are in the actual conflict with death; and, amidst pain and suffering, and the collapse of bodily and mental faculties, are passing through the swellings of Jordan. It will at times alleviate our own personal afflictions to think of such,—to commit them to the great and good Shepherd, and to weep with them that weep; as, when subjected to like trials, we experience support from the sympathy and prayers of fellow-sufferers. Much of the communion of saints is here. Even when far separated, the travellers to the heavenly rest are helpful to one another. And when they meet in the valley, and walk in company, they go on "from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion."

This is, moreover, the appointed *way to a glorious rest*. We pass "through fire and water" to a "wealthy place." After being tossed with storm and tempest, we reach the desired haven. The travellers to Mount Zion are held up, and their feet kept from falling. None who walk in the way of holiness can perish. No "lion or ravenous beast can come up thereon." "The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." Walking implies *activity and progress*. The travellers are not left in the valley—they

pass through it to the end, where there is light at eventide. They go in the strength of the Lord God, and their walk terminates at length in the land of uprightness.

There are many *considerations* fitted to support and bear them through the valley of death-shade. The whole "armour of God" is provided, and they are encouraged to take it to themselves. None is provided for the back. The remembrance of past relief cheers them in the thick darkness, and leads them to hope in future deliverance. (Ps. lxxvii. 11-13.) The Bible, with its bright discoveries and precious promises, furnishes sure direction and strong consolation. It meets the darkest facts—trouble, sin, enemies, the world, temptation, death; and shows how, instead of injuring, they contribute to the believer's benefit. God's love is unchanged by affliction; nay, rather, the affliction is itself a token of special love. "Whom the Father loveth, He chasteneth." His providences, whether bright or dark, work together for good. The voices of those who have gone before through the valley are, at times, heard in the darkness, imparting support and consolation. Job was delivered from dense darkness, and his latter end, better than the beginning, greatly increased. *Jonah declared—"All thy billows and thy waves passed over me. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever. Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord, my God." (Jonah ii. 3-6.) The language of *Augustine* in his "Confessions" is appropriate and cheering to them that walk through the valley: "It is one thing to see, from the summit of a woody mountain, the house of peace, and finding no way thither, vainly to try to reach it through impassable thickets, while the lion and the dragon are besetting and lying in wait for us; and another, quite another, to keep in the way that leads thither, guided by the care of the celestial Captain, where no deserters from the heavenly army are permitted to lurk and rob." There is personal and complete safety while adhering to the

Shepherd, and following His leading. He guides His flock amid the darkness; He holds up their goings, and recovers them when they slide or fall. He protects them from all enemies and dangers; and, losing none of all that were given Him, He will ultimately lead them forth to light and glorious triumph.

II. THE FEAR OF EVIL OVERCOME.

The language of assured confidence is full and very expressive: "*I will fear no evil.*" Evil of diversified kind, and assailing from various quarters, is anticipated, but the traveller, divinely led, escapes from it and triumphs over it. The fear of evil is, on many grounds, *natural*, and we are always liable to be tried with it. The sheep are timid, exposed, and defenceless. Darkness around will occasion fear. Shadows are mistaken for realities, and realities for shadows. Men fear for the *terrors by night*. Even chosen disciples, in a scene of unusual solemnity and of high privilege, "feared as they entered into the cloud." With some of God's servants fears are constitutional. There is a *physical* as well as *moral* fear of coming calamity and death. The intense love of life makes them shrink with dread from the thought of dissolution; and when this is carried to excess, it becomes a strong temptation. It leads, in some instances, to deny the truth, and in others to neglect preparation for dying. It generates a slavish spirit, and robs the soul of joy and peace in believing. "Through fear of death," some are all their lifetime "subject to bondage."

The *position* in which we enter and walk in the valley of death-shade aggravates fears. The place is dark, solitary, and repulsive. We generally enter and pass through great troubles alone. The friends who at other times were near are either removed or stand aloof from our trial; and even were they near at hand, they cannot ease our pain or alleviate our sorrows. The Shepherd of the flock says of His own sufferings, "I have trodden the winepress

alone; and of the people there was none with me." (Isa. lxiii. 3.) Of those who have had fellowship with Him in His sufferings, not a few have been constrained to exclaim, "I looked on my right hand, and behold, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." (Ps. cxlii. 1.) The sense of being solitary and forsaken at times oppresses the spirit, and the thick darkness, external and internal, causes overwhelming dismay. Clouds and darkness are round about Jehovah's throne. "If one look into the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof." (Isa. v. 30.)

These fears refer to *the past* and forebode *the future*. The retrospect of life is at times painfully trying. The sense of former sins oppresses the spirit, and causes poignant distress of mind. Conscience awakened brings clearly into view many aggravated provocations. Backslidings of heart and life, privileges and opportunities misimproved, vows broken, frequent positive transgressions, and great pollutions even of the best services, excite fears of Divine displeasure and rejection. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee; our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." (Ps. xc. 8.) Dreading condemnation and rejection by a holy God, the penitent cries out, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2.) Then the thought of passing into the eternal and unchangeable state appals and overcomes. The fear of the doom of the unjust steward, or of the slothful and wicked servant—the dread of the wrath to come, fills the soul with gloomy apprehensions and unwonted terrors. "O Lord, why castest Thou off my soul? why hidest Thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." (Ps. lxxxviii. 14-16.)

However great and disturbing are these fears, there is

ample provision for deliverance from them, and victory over them. This lies not in mere animal courage, or in the instinctive love of life, and the consequent fear of death being feeble; and much less in ignorant and wrong views of the issue of affliction and death. The only essential remedy is in the *Shepherd* Himself, and in His *sure and constant guidance*. He loved and chose each one of the flock. He redeemed the sheep with His precious blood. He sought them out when lost, and brought them to His fold. He cannot, therefore, leave them to be overcome of any evil, or to perish. They need not fear final backsliding. He who saved them from death will preserve their feet from falling. If Jehovah is indeed "my Shepherd," then He will constantly guide me by His counsel, and receive me to glory. I have no cause to fear enemies. He has already conquered them all, and He reigns to bring them down. Their relation to the Divine Shepherd serves to efface all evil in the past, and to clear up all the darkness for the future. It is not through a person's own fearlessness, but by the Divine care; not by any strength in himself, but through the all-sufficient grace of the Saviour—even when that care and grace might appear no more available—that fears are overcome, and that from dangers and distresses of every kind there is secured complete deliverance.

To the flock of Christ, and every particular member of it, the assurance may be given, that *there is in reality nothing evil either in the valley of death-shade or beyond it*. By the work of Christ on their behalf, all evils are unstinged, all enemies are conquered. Troubles are sent in love; they are mitigated, even when they are suffered, and are rendered conducive to the present and eternal good of the sufferers. Though for the present not joyous but grievous, they "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised" by them. Enemies may annoy, but they cannot effectually injure. Physical evils of every kind are rendered powerless; and in the dispensa-

tion of the covenant of peace, they become salutary discipline and healing medicine. Moral evil—sin in themselves, and the malice and temptations of devils and of this present world, are put away and overcome. Who can harm us, if we be followers of that which is good? “Who is He that condemneth? It is God that justifieth,” &c. The darkness of affliction is like the cloud in the day of rain, that makes the bow of promise and hope more bright and glorious. As the night contrasted with the risen day, or the dim twilight compared with the morning dawn, so afflictions endured render the deliverance more sweet, and the joys of completed salvation more abundant and exhilarating. Jehovah, the Shepherd of the sheep, makes them glad according to the days wherein He afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil.” (Ps. xc. 15). *

A present and great benefit believers have in being led by the Shepherd into the valley of death-shade. They are *separated and weaned* from an evil world. They are taken from its vain cares and engrossing pursuits, and divorced from its deceitful pleasures. They are led to genuine penitence and true humility. The valley of humiliation lies hard by that of death-shade. If we belong to Christ's flock, as we are called to traverse the one, so will we have to go down the other. This is indeed often the direct road to the valley of humiliation, which is aptly pictured “as fertile and green, adorned with lilies, where the shepherd boys have a merrier life, and wear more of heart's-ease in their hose than he who is clad in silk and velvet. Here a man shall not be let and hindered in his contemplation, as in other places he is apt to be. This is a valley that nobody walks in but those that love a pilgrim's life. In this valley our Lord formerly had His country house; He loved much to be here. In this place, and to the

* The martyr Cargill declared, as he surrendered his life to seal a noble testimony—“I have less fear in going up this ladder to die, than I have had many times in going up to the pulpit to preach.”

people that lived and traced these grounds, He left a yearly revenue, to be faithfully paid them at certain seasons, for their maintenance by the way, and for their further encouragement to go on their pilgrimage."*

III. THE GRAND REASON.

The great reason why the believer, when traversing the dark and lonely valley of death-shade, rises superior to fears, is the realised presence of the Shepherd: "*Thou art with me.*" This address is most weighty and comprehensive. I am not required to enter the darkness or encounter danger alone. The Invisible will attend me, and be my protector on every side. If God will be my companion, guide, and comforter, then surely there is no place for misgiving and dismay, and fears from whatever quarter are vain.

This is the Shepherd's glorious *name and memorial*. His name is *Immanuel*, God with us. He is the "I AM," when He comes to save His flock, and to guide them through the wilderness. This Divine name implies that He is never separated from His people. As a Shepherd is among His sheep that are scattered, and delivers them out of all places where "they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day," (Ezek. xxxiv. 12), so does the Shepherd of Israel abide with His people; and, when fears and dangers assail them, He is present to relieve and deliver them.

He is with them, especially to *make out His faithful promise*. This is all-sustaining and comforting, and is adapted to every emergency and trial. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (Exod. xxxiii. 14.) As to Jacob, He assures every believer of guidance, needful provision, and ultimate rest. "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I

* Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

have spoken to thee of." (Gen. xxviii. 15.) The universality of the terms of the promise indicates that it shall surely be accomplished. Not one good thing spoken has failed, or can ever fail of fulfilment. He that speaks the word, Himself makes it good; and this He does by coming to be with His people at all times, especially when they are encompassed with difficulties and dangers, and when they pass through the wilderness.

He is with them, *to sustain and comfort them, and to overcome all enemies and fears.* The assured promise of the great Shepherd guarantees to His sheep support and deliverance in every emergency. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isa. xli. 10.) The promise of the Spirit—the Comforter, to abide with them for ever, assures them of spiritual consolation against all sorrows. The saints learn to "glory in tribulation also," as from it they reap precious and enduring fruit. Through grace imparted, they resist temptations, stand steadfast in trial, and overcome in manifold conflict. The Lord of Hosts with them is mightier than all enemies; the God of Jacob is their refuge. His faithful word assures them of final and complete victory. "I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. My faithfulness and mercy shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted." (Ps. lxxxix. 23, 24.)

This presence *continues to the end*; and He makes Himself known in glory for ever. He that is with the flock is all power and love—all truth, and wisdom, and compassion. To meet all changes and every possible condition, He promises, "I will never, no, never, leave thee, nor forsake thee." His own that are in the world, "whom He loved from eternity, He will love to the end." (John xiii. 1.) The way by which the ransomed pass through the wilderness is marked by painful separations. A few friends may remain and accompany us as far as they can when we

enter the valley of the shadow of death. But they must at length speak the parting word and remain behind when we are called to pass over the river of death. We enter these waters, as far as creature-help is concerned, alone; and yet the believer is not alone. The Captain of salvation—death's Conqueror—goes before him, and abides near him. He is encouraged to lean upon His arm of power, and to confide in His everlasting love. He has undertaken to bear him up, and to carry him through in safety. “*At evening time it shall be light.*” (Zech. xiv. 7.) The Saviour at the hour of dissolution fulfils His precious word—“I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John xiv. 3.) He conducts the disembodied spirit to brighter regions, and welcomes the faithful servant to the joy of His Lord. The happiness of the saints in death is to depart and be with Christ; the glory and bliss of heaven is to be with Him for ever. The Lamb, as it had been slain, is in the midst of His saints; they go no more out. “In His presence there is fulness of joy; at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Ps. xvi. 11.) He who led them all the way through life—who conducted them safely in death—will enhance their blessedness for ever, by guiding them to the sources of heavenly felicity. “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (Rev. vii. 17.)

IV. THE CONSOLATION PROVIDED.

As the full ground of deliverance from fears of every kind, it is declared—“*Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*” Every word here is emphatic and expressive. “*Thy rod*”—that which belongs to the Shepherd alone—by which He is known and distinguished. “*Thy staff*”—that which is peculiarly His too. “*They comfort*”—they alone not merely protect and sustain, but comfort too. They fill with Divine consolation, and enrich with exuberant joy

of spirit. When called to go down to troubles, when in darkness, affliction, and death, if we know aright this rod and staff of the Divine Shepherd, we will learn to rejoice in tribulation. There will be sweet comfort against all grief; and the strong consolation imparted will be the prelude and foretaste of the fulness of joy which is in God's presence for evermore.

The language is figurative, but full of important meaning. The "rod" is not that of affliction, for it is comfort and not chastening that is needed and administered when passing through the darkness. It is the *sceptre* and *authority* of Messiah the Prince. The rod is the symbol of dominion. "Strong rods are for the rulers." Aaron's rod that blossomed signified the authority of His priesthood confirmed and vigorous. The universal mediatorial dominion of the Redeemer is the ground of all comfort and joy in trouble and in death. He has power in heaven and earth. His authority is sovereign, uncontrollable, and universal. The government over all worlds, and over all objects in the universe, is in His hands. He is "Head over all things to the church, which is His body." "He has the keys of hell and of death." Lordship over the invisible world is His. Our abundant comfort is, that none can effectually thwart or oppose His power. He limits and controls the assaults of enemies, assuages the waters of trouble, upholds in death, and fully delivers from it by His almighty power. "Through death, He destroys him that had the power of death, and delivers them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hob. ii. 15.)

This rod is the *gracious care of the Shepherd*. He who is a Prince and Saviour is, at the same time, the Shepherd of the sheep. The rod or *crook* is the chosen symbol of pastoral authority and care. Viewed as the instrument which the Shepherd employs, it manifests His ceaseless vigilance; and is adapted to the acts of considerate kindness which He performs towards His flock. Bent at one

end, it catches the feet of the sheep when it falls, to uphold it, and to restrain it when it wanders. Put under the body of the sheep, it stays it in slipping or sinking in miry places. Like the rod of the *tithing-master*, it separates and distinguishes a holy portion to the Lord. "I will cause them to pass under the rod, and I will bring them into the bond of the covenant." (Ezek. xx. 37; Levit. xxvii. 32.) The Shepherd's power and loving care correct the flock when they are disobedient, bring them back when they wander, heal their diseases, and make ample provision for all their wants. His is tender, incessant, and minute care. Nothing that concerns the safety, support, and salvation of the weakest or most tried believer is beneath the Saviour's regard. All is provided for in the covenant, and is supplied in season by His administration. Without fear or misgivings, they should at all times cast their care upon the Lord, assured that He cares for them.

The "*staff*" of the Shepherd is that with which He Himself walked, and the support, too, which He gives to the weak and helpless. As Jacob, when he wandered from his father's house, crossed the Jordan with his staff (Gen. xxxii. 10), and on his dying bed worshipped, leaning on it, so the Christian begins his pilgrimage resting on the promise. It is his stay throughout all the journey of life, and his support and comfort as he traverses the dark valley. The *promises of the covenant* were the Shepherd's own upholding in His whole work of obedience and suffering. They were all made out to Him in the days of His flesh; and, as "tried words," they are His own staff, presented for the support and consolation of His people. They are absolute, unconditional, "exceeding great and precious" promises. Believers, as they embrace and lean upon them, become "heirs of the promise," and they have the full title to all the rich inheritance which it contains. "By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. vi. 18). This *rod* and *staff* are exhibited in

the word of the Gospel, accompanied by the Spirit. The Gospel is the grand vehicle of the Saviour's authority and power. It is "the rod of His strength" sent out of Zion. (Ps. cx. 3.) It is "the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." (Rom. i. 16.) Christ and His salvation are in the word preached, and are nigh to them that hear it. The "excellency of His power" is here. (2 Cor. iv. 7.) The living Spirit renders the word "quick and powerful." Through His gracious agency, the Gospel comes "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thes. i. 5.) To the convinced sinner it speaks pardon; it rebukes the adversary, and fills the saints with joy and peace in believing. He who is with them in trouble thus works all His work of power in them and on their behalf.

Discoveries of this rod and staff are the sure tokens of the Shepherd's promise and endearing care. They are often most brightly seen in the darkness. The "Lord sits King upon the floods." He rules the raging of the sea; and when the waves thereof swell, He stills them. When His people are made to pass under the rod, He "brings them into the bond of the covenant," and owns them as His. The seal and earnest of His Spirit assure them of their interest in His love and salvation. He loves them to the end. Brought "into the bond of the covenant," they can never be cast out, and are safe for eternity. The power of the Shepherd is sufficient to uphold them, to bring down all their enemies, and to complete their salvation, while His loving care secures them against all possibility of failure. There is strong consolation in the assurance—"I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John x. 14, 28.) The dominion of the Prince and the care of the Redeemer secure to the redeemed all that they can possibly need. He takes constant cognisance of their case—guides,

governs, protects them by His rod. He sustains and comforts them with His staff. This was the confidence of Israel at the Red Sea—this their safety in the swellings of Jordan. In both cases there was a glorious display of the Saviour's watchful care, and of His sovereign power and authority. In both there was the fulfilment of His true and faithful promise. He "led them with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name." (Isa. lxiii. 12.) Should we not seek earnestly such gracious discoveries? It is recorded of *Daniel Webster*, the eminent American statesman, that in the last days of his life he found no words more fitted to express the support needed by a dying man than "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." So should we believe and hope to the end.

The power and gracious care of the Redeemer are, at times, clearly seen in the *darkness of trouble and at the hour of death*. Christ Jesus appears as a "Shepherd among His sheep in the cloudy and dark day." He comes as the Conqueror of hell and of death. He discovers His sovereign authority and displays His almighty power to deliver and save, and at the same time His condescending, loving care. Like as He spoke to the patriarch, so He guarantees His gracious presence and ultimate deliverance—"Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with thee, and will surely bring thee up again." "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (Gen. xlv. 4; Ex. xxxiii. 14)

The rod and the staff of the Shepherd subserve to all the flock *most salutary and important purposes*. As they are made to pass under the rod, they are *avoided and marked* as peculiarly His. They are separated and set apart from others, as the Lord's portion. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." "I give unto them eternal life," as already begun, and its final enjoyment secured. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels." Their interest in the Shepherd and His care

is at times made clear to the conscience; and saints and martyrs in death have been thus mightily upheld and comforted.

Thus, too, enemies *are restrained and driven away*. With His crook the Shepherd drives off the dogs that would worry and scatter the sheep. By His power the Redeemer arrests and restrains enemies, and at length brings them down and destroys them. As in the triumphal song of Moses at the Red Sea, so, through the glorious power of the Saviour, His people sing of victory. "By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone, till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased." (Exod. xv. 16.) "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." (Ver. 13.)

They impart *special consolation* under affliction and sorrow, and open up, when in a suffering condition, *bright and joyful prospects*. This is peculiarly characteristic of the spiritual comfort which a view of the Redeemer's rod and staff confers. He sends His saints comfort against all grief. When their troubles abound, their consolation in Christ also abounds. The Spirit sent forth by the ascended Redeemer gives heart's-ease in trouble. As Paul and Silas in prison sang praises at midnight—(Acts xvi. 25), so believers, when exposed to manifold trials, yet learn to rejoice in the God of salvation. This discovery has brightened with holy joy many a martyr's gloomy prison, and shed a halo of glory around the stake and the scaffold. This joy was theirs because they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ; and it was great, heartfelt, and inexpressible.

This joy has reference to *blessed future prospects*. "They *will* comfort me"—strongly expressed in the original—is the language of lively hope, the fruit of faith. They *have* done it in the past, they will, in time to come, expel sorrow and grief, and fill the heart with spiritual gladness. The believer, even while treading the low and dark valley,

is given to know that there is "consolation in Christ." (Phil. ii. 4.) The rod and staff of the Saviour brought near relieve all distress, and fill the heart with overflowing joy. A bright scene opens in prospect before the afflicted child of the covenant. The densest clouds will soon part and vanish away. The eternal daybreak approaches near. The word of promise, powerfully applied and appropriated, becomes at once a prop to support from sinking, and a defence against all the powers of darkness. As the end approaches, light beams upon the path of the traveller. The prospect of the crown of eternal salvation swells and animates the heart. Our highest comforts are evanescent and insufficient here. But standing in view of the goal, the "mark of the prize of the high calling," to which the Christian presses forward, is seen surpassingly excellent and glorious.

IN CONCLUSION.

The subject admonishes us seriously to consider *the walking through the valley of death-shade for ourselves*. This is appointed, and necessary for all the ransomed of the Lord who are going forward to the heavenly rest. It is a part of the Divine guidance—the way in which the Good Shepherd conducts His flock to the fold in glory. We should regard ourselves as exposed to afflictive trials, and to fears and darkness, and should view these as near and imminent. Our only safety is to cling to the Shepherd of Israel. We should take Him to be with us—look to Him alone, and resolutely follow Him. All confidence should be placed in His promised gracious presence. "Thou art with me" is sufficient to silence all doubts, banish all fears, and inspire joyful and triumphant hopes. We should greatly value the Saviour's gracious presence, and earnestly plead the promise. We should be unwilling to take any step in life without Him. How soon He may call any of us to enter the valley of death-shade we cannot tell. But it greatly concerns us to take Him engaged to

bo with us. Like Moses, we should refuse to advance unaccompanied by our Divine Leader. We should continue to plead till He gives the assurance, "I will certainly go with thee." As the two disciples, journeying toward Emmaus, constrained the risen Saviour to remain with them till He manifested to them His glory, so should we constrain Him, by wrestling prayer, to abide with us, as we pass under the cloud, and enter the scene of trial. Our great duty is to live continually as if He were with us, and as being always in His immediate presence. Thus we walk with God, and He is ever nigh to relieve and bless. We should go into no place or scene where we may not expect and realise His gracious presence. If we aim to walk with Him, we may rise above the fear of evil. Already for us He has put away all sin, subdued all enemies, and placed them under restraint. We may fully trust Him for present upholding, and for future safety and deliverance. Evils of whatever kind have been already unstinged; they are powerless to hurt us, and at length they will be completely and for ever done away.

We should *behold by faith this rod and staff, and draw support and comfort from them now.* The power and dominion of the enthroned Redeemer are matter of joy to the saints in all their conflicts and difficulties and trials. He is Head of all principalities and powers. He reigns supreme throughout the universe for the good of His people, till all their enemies have become his footstool, and till they are advanced to sit with Him on His throne, and to be joint-heirs with Him in glory. His care as a Shepherd is most condescending, minute, and constant. We should by faith behold His glory, and rest in His pre-eminent fitness for His high office. We should joyfully embrace the promise as a "tried word," and as the "rod of His strength" sent out of Zion. Hence may we even now draw true comfort and encouragement. We have assuredly the warrant to "joy in God receiving the atonement." (Rom. v. 11.) There is substantial, everlasting consolation in Christ's

authority—in His loving care, and His faithful promise. He is over all that can mar comfort, and obstruct His people's final salvation. His promises are unfailing; His power is engaged for their fulfilment. We have abundant ground to rejoice evermore in hope, and to give thanks to Him who "always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

Finally—We should *rest for comfort and victory in death* here. The dominion and power of the Redeemer extend to the closing act of human life. The dying beds and the graves of the saints are within His domain, as is the state of disobedient spirits. He is ever wont to display His royal power and His most condescending care toward His people in death. "Precious in His sight is the death of His saints." He owns them and distinguishes them as His. As the "Captain of salvation," He fights for them the last battle, and achieves for them the victory.

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walk of virtuous life;
Quite in the verge of heaven."

The latter end of the righteous is peace. At eventide there is light. The walk through the dark valley conducts into the daybreak of overflowing light: it is the immediate precursor of everlasting joy and triumph. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. xxxv. 10.) "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more pain; for the former things are passed away." (Rev. xxi. 4.) The remembrance of the dark valley, and of trials and conflicts and afflictions that befel them in the wilderness, will render heaven bright by contrast, and enhance their happiness throughout eternity. The beatific vision in glory is beholding the Lamb slain in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of His redeemed. It is an intuitive, cloudless, transporting view of the Saviour's rod and staff. Then there is fulness of joy in God's presence—there are "rivers

of pleasures" at His right hand for evermore. The golden harps of saints made perfect are perpetually attuned to the sweetest melody. The new song of the ransomed is sung in the immediate presence of the Lamb. They then see clearly that in all the way that the Shepherd led them "goodness and mercy followed them;" and the blessed issue is that they will "dwell in the Lord's house for ever." Instead of support in weakness, comfort in sorrow, and songs in the night, there will be ecstatic joys and triumphant hallelujahs, full, overflowing, and everlasting.

THE SECOND COMING OF THE ASCENDED SAVIOUR.

Acts i. 11—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

THE words of this text were addressed to the Apostles of Christ, as their Master, removed from them, ascended to heaven to take possession of His mediatorial throne. They are naturally connected with, and supplemental to the closing verses of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke (ver. 50-53), and show plainly that the inspired penman of the Gospel and of the book of Acts was one and the same person.

During the forty days that intervened between our Lord's resurrection and His ascension to glory, He had not gone in and out with His disciples, or been constantly with them, as He was before His sufferings and death. He made several appearances to them, and had a number of distinct *interviews* with them. These were in different places—generally sudden and unexpected, and frequently terminated by His rendering Himself invisible, and vanishing out of their sight. In the Gospels, *nine* at least of these manifestations of the risen Saviour are recorded—1. To Mary Magdalene; 2. To the other women; 3. To the two disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus; 4. To Peter; 5. To the ten Apostles, Thomas being absent; 6. To the eleven; 7. To seven Apostles at the sea of Tiberias; 8. To the eleven and many others on a mountain in Galilee; and 9. To the Apostles in or near Jerusalem immediately before His ascension. The Apostle Paul (1 Cor. xv. 7) besides mentions an appearance of the Redeemer to James, which probably took place after that to the "five hundred brethren at once." in Galilee.

As the forty days verged to a close, our Lord went up from Galilee to Jerusalem, where He had in all probability appointed His disciples to meet Him. It was befitting that He should ascend to the glory of His mediatorial throne, from the scene of communion with His disciples on earth, and of His lowest abasement. When they were come together, and had the first intercourse with their Master, He gently reproved their curiosity and carnal views respecting His kingdom; assigned them their work as chosen witnesses of His person and work to the ends of the earth; and He guaranteed to them, in the promised mission of the Spirit, "power from on high" for all their future labours and trials. When these words of direction and encouragement were spoken, "He led them out as far as to Bethany." It was, as the original words imply, *gentle leading*. They followed as He went before in the way, and came near the confines of the region of Bethany, which approached the outskirts of Jerusalem. In the road by which His triumphal entry had, shortly before His crucifixion, swept into the earthly metropolis, from the same place He was to ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem. Thence, from near the scene of His lowest abasement and bitterest agony, He went away, and was received up into glory. As His disciples stood wondering with fixed gaze and astonishment, while "the cloud received Him out of their sight," angel-voices addressed to them words of mingled reproof, consolation, and power—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." This angelic announcement deeply concerns us too. While, as sinners guilty and perishing, we have a constant concern in the incarnation and atoning death of the Saviour, we should cherish fixed views of His ascension to heaven, and entertain joyful expectations of His second coming and future glorious appearance. A principal design of celebrating the Lord's Supper is to "show forth His death till He come." As we go up to the sacred feast,

we should seek to have a steadfast lively faith in the Saviour's second coming. We should make a serious heartfelt preparation for it, and labour to obtain a sealed assurance of our interest in the blessedness of His glorious appearance.

I. THE SCENE AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT.

It presents, as the chief object of manifestation, the wondrous act of the Saviour's ascension to glory.

The narrative of the evangelist is singularly graphic and expressive. "He led them out as far as to Bethany; and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." (Luke xxiv. 50, 51.) The ascension of the Redeemer was the visible attestation of the acceptance by the Father of His finished work, and the ample assurance to His people of the enjoyment of all salvation-blessings. He went up as a *public person* to take possession of heaven in their name, to reign and intercede with power on their behalf—the certain pledge and earnest of a wide-spread harvest of glory. The last attitude in which He was seen as He left the earth was one of blessing. The action was befitting the benignity of His character. It was worthy of Him who came into our world, and lived and died to confer upon the sons of men the richest blessings. "Men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." (Ps. lxxii. 17.) As the great High Priest of our profession, He asked from the Father the blessing, and, as the King of the covenant, He authoritatively conferred it. When He had spoken the things concerning His kingdom, the descent of the Spirit, and the character and work of His disciples, He was "received up." "While they beheld," as they looked on and saw the whole proceeding, He was "caught up and rose suddenly."* With steadfast gaze their eyes continued to follow the ascending Saviour, till the wondrous object had passed the

* The Greek verb means the cloud "came in under."

natural and necessary boundary of vision, and the heavens had received Him till the restitution of all things.

These "*two men*," who stood by the Apostles, were *celestial messengers*, interested in the whole work of the Redeemer. As they were looking intensely into the opened door in heaven, "behold two men stood by them in white apparel." They appeared "in brightness and supernatural effulgence," in such array as is frequently ascribed to angelic beings. (Luke xxiv. 4; John xx. 12; Matt. xxviii. 5.) Some late expositors have conjectured that these two men were Moses and Elias, who appeared on the mount of transfiguration—(Luke ix. 31), in celestial splendour, and conversed of "His decease," or *Exodus*, to be accomplished at Jerusalem. These, it is thought, returned again, to bear witness to the Saviour's final departure, and of the design of His ascension to heaven, to be the perpetual Legislator and Prophet of the Church. Rather are they to be regarded as angels in human guise, sent to instruct and comfort the disciples on this solemn occasion. They may have been the same two who met the women at the sepulchre—(Matt. xxviii. 2; Mark xvi. 5), and announced to them the first cheering tidings of the Saviour's resurrection. Or, as a part of the bright train that accompanied Him when He ascended up on high, "leading captivity captive," they dropped behind, to speak words of encouragement and high hope to the astonished disciples remaining on earth.

The Redeemer ascended to His mediatorial throne with a glorious *retinue of holy angels*. (Ps. xviii. 17.) "He was seen of angels." These had witnessed His agony and crucifixion with thrilling wonder and amazement, and they now swelled His triumph and heralded His entrance into glory. They loudly proclaimed the Saviour's conquest over hell and death; and as they accompanied Him rejoicing to the portals of bliss, they demanded free entrance for the illustrious Conqueror—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of

glory shall come in." (Ps. xxiv. 7.) Angels employed in the government of providence, and in the dispensation of the Gospel, delight in advancing the glory of Christ, and in ministering to the heirs of salvation. Intensely loving the Redeemer, and desiring to look into the things pertaining to His sufferings and glory, it was the high privilege of the angelic hosts to behold Him sitting down upon His mediatorial throne. Those who lingered behind, and remained with the disciples on earth, displayed their readiness to obey, and their interest in the edification and comfort of the church. They announced, as before at Bethlehem on the Saviour's birth, and at His resurrection, tidings of great joy concerning the blessedness of His second coming.

The angelic message *reproved the forgetfulness and unbelief* of the disciples, and called them to *implicit obedience and submission*. They addressed them—"Ye men of Galilee," reminding them at once of their humble origin, and of the honour the Saviour had put upon them in choosing them to be His ambassadors and the heralds of His salvation. They called them by a name which indicated that they were the fellow-countrymen and tried friends of Him who was gone. In the astonishment and commingled thoughts of their minds, they perhaps despaired of ever seeing Him again; or, like the sons of the prophets on Elijah's translation, they may have expected His speedy return. The question, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" implied some measure of censure, and was designed to call away the minds of the disciples from carnal views and dreams of earthly glory. The promise that the Comforter should come was suspended on the Saviour's departure, and His return to the bosom of the Father. Repeatedly had He told them He would come again, and in the very manner that He went away. The question put by the angels was a strong expostulation—"Why stand ye gazing?"—confused, perplexed, unbelieving, even though looking after Christ ascending and towards heaven! It was not befitting that they should

remain in idleness and mute astonishment. They had work to do for the advancement of the Redeemer's glory, and the salvation of perishing men. As the risen Saviour said to Mary at the sepulchre, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended," and directed her, instead of lingering near His person, to go forthwith and announce the tidings of His resurrection to His brethren; so He directed the disciples, as he does us, to go and work diligently in His service, and to wait for and prepare for His promised and certain return. Our great duty is to believe His word, occupy till He come, and look for and hasten to His glorious appearance.

II. HIS COMING AGAIN.

The assurance of the Saviour's return from heaven is given in terms the most emphatic and expressive. The close analogy between the manner of His departure and His return is indicated by a twofold expression. "He shall *so* come," and "in *like manner*," as He went away. He shall appear *personally, visibly, and gloriously*. Special stress, too, is laid upon the place into which He had entered, and from which He would come back. *Three* times are the words "into heaven" repeated, indicating that His return would be as certain, *corporeal*, and *local* as the departure which their eyes had witnessed. It is observable, besides, that the second coming of the Saviour is immediately connected with His ascension. Between these two no event intervenes equal in importance to either. The terms in which the angelic announcement was made declared that the ascension to glory of the Redeemer, and His return for judgment, were of unspeakable importance, and intimated that the joyful expectation of His future glorious appearance should swallow up the sorrow of His departure, and console the friends of Christ under the sense of His absence.

We have here the *amplest assurance of the Saviour's second*

coming. This has been in all past ages the hope of the church. It was early predicted, and held forth in bright announcements to the faith and joyful hopes of the saints. Enoch, "the seventh from Adam," prophesied, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." (Jude 14.) The church was taught to sing in wrapt devotion, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God is Judge Himself." (Ps. l. 3-7.) The Saviour, as the great prophet of the covenant, spoke of His future coming, and exhibited it in aspects the most commanding and affecting. One of His illustrious titles is, "He that cometh,"—*the coming One*, which is eminently distinctive of His character, and declares that all that He is now doing looks forward to this grand consummation. The exhortations, warnings, and encouragements of the Redeemer to the church receive their strongest emphasis from the assurance of His certain coming. "Watch, therefore, for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh." "He will come with power and great glory." He will come as a *King*, to take account of His servants; as the *Householder*, to apportion meat and a reward to His domestics; as the heavenly *Bridegroom*, to receive the bride and her virgin companions to the marriage supper.

His manifestations *in grace and providence* now have a distinct reference to His future glorious appearance. By them He confers blessings and effects ends which will be perfectly and gloriously accomplished at His second coming. In His word and ordinances He comes spiritually as Zion's King, having salvation. By the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, He sends "times of refreshing" from His presence, and comes to bless His people. In the movements of providence, by dispensations of judgment and mercy, He

displays His character as the Governor among the nations and the sovereign Judge of the earth; and He gives plain pre-intimations of His final procedure as the Judge of the quick and the dead. In the destruction of Jerusalem, the subversion of Rome Pagan, and the future downfall of Antichrist, the last judgment is forestalled, and to some extent exemplified. (Matt. xxiv.; Rev. vi., xviii.) And when, on the overthrow of mystical Babylon, He shall take Him His great power to reign, and shall establish His kingdom universally in the earth, He will then brightly manifest the character and designs of His return at the last judgment.

This coming announced by the angels points mainly, if not exclusively, to the Saviour's *second glorious appearance at the general resurrection*. There will be no "personal return" of the Redeemer to the earth before the general resurrection and the final judgment. He will then "*appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" (Heb. ix. 28.) In His first advent He appeared as "the sin-bearer;" in His second, He will come as a magnanimous Conqueror—the Judge of the quick and the dead, and in glorious majesty, as a sovereign universal Ruler. He will then be visibly manifested. He shall come "in power and great glory." "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him shall wail because of Him." (Rev. i. 7.) He shall come for judgment as the Godman, in the bright display of His mediatorial character and excellency. A full manifestation of His glory as Immanuel, the redeeming Head of His church, was never made before. This will be "the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ." The "heavens and the earth shall be lighted with His glory."

The Saviour will come at last for *objects the most momentous*. He ascended into heaven to receive His glorious reward—to receive gifts for men, that He might confer them, especially those of the Spirit, and the offices and privileges of His house; to intercede within the veil, to sit upon the throne of universe, and to prepare a place in heaven for

all His redeemed. He will come again to "deliver up the kingdom," and to terminate the administration of the present mediatorial scheme. (1 Cor. xv. 24.) He will judge angels and men at His appearance. He shall then receive His ransomed church fully made up and prepared as "a bride for Her husband." He will confer upon His risen saints the blissful reward, and introduce the glorious reign of eternity. While the *form* of the mediatorial government shall be changed, Christ Jesus will reign for ever over His glorified church. At His second coming, the whole design of eternal love, the great end of the Saviour's Surety-engagement and death, will be fully accomplished. All things being subdued by His power, the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, "that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. xv. 28.)

With special emphasis it is declared that the object of this glorious appearance is "*This same Jesus*,"—that "very one" who, as the babe of Bethlehem, was named Jesus, who was contemptuously called by enemies "Jesus of Nazareth," and who was known to His disciples by this familiar designation, shall come again "without sin unto salvation." He shall appear invested with the same attributes, and clothed with the same character as He displayed on earth, and when He ascended to heaven.

This announcement declares that He will come in the *splendour of His Divine and mediatorial glory*. On His coming into our world He was heralded as Jesus, God of salvation, and named "Immanuel," "God with us." The doctrines which He taught, and the miracles which He performed, declared Him to be "the Son of God with power." This same Jesus will come at length, in the full manifestation of His eternal Godhead. He will appear in His own and His Father's glory. "God is Judge Himself."

Yet will He also appear in His *glorified humanity*. Impressively did He show once and again to His disciples, after His resurrection, that the nature in which He suffered

was to partake of His exaltation-glory. In "the upper chamber," when He met with them, He said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke xxiv. 39.) When He met with Mary at the sepulchre, in the message sent to His brethren, He declared, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.) As the elder Brother of His saints, He will come again. He will "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 31.) "The Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." (John v. 27.) This will be for the everlasting confusion of enemies, and for the unspeakable joy and comfort of His people.

He will come again in *the tenderest love and condescension to His saints*. When the heavens shall be lightened with His glory, and His enemies shall be overwhelmed with dismay, He will appear in every aspect of benignity and love to His people. The same Jesus who redeemed them from death, reclaimed them from wandering, bore with their infirmities, sympathized with their sorrows, and relieved all their wants, will come in all the tenderness of the compassion and love that He manifested when on earth. This will be most conspicuously displayed at His second coming. He will send forth His angels to separate the righteous from the wicked, and to gather together the saints to His immediate presence. The enthroned Redeemer will own and welcome the redeemed before an assembled universe: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Those who served Him and suffered with Him, He will, in "the day of the manifestation of the sons of God," confess before His Father and His angels. His glorious presence, instead of terror, will excite in them joy and ecstatic delight. He will "gird Himself, and come forth and serve them,"—employing all His creatures, and

exerting all His attributes to do them honour. The Man who bled and died on Calvary for them will acknowledge them as standing to Him in the most endearing relations. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought : they shall enter into the King's palace." (Ps. xlv. 15.)

This same Jesus will come to take *account of His servants, and to bestow honour and reward upon the faithful.* "After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." (Matt. xxv. 19.) Those who faithfully occupied their talents till He comes will be welcomed to "the joy of their Lord," and to dignity and honour proportioned to the extent of their service ; while the negligent and slothful will be cast out and punished. He will Himself bestow the reward. "The crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me in that day, and not to me only, but to all such as love His appearance." (2 Tim. iv. 8.) As He comes, "His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." (Isa. xl. 10.) It is the reward of grace—the full recompense of bliss unspeakable and unending. The saints are delivered from "light and momentary" afflictions, which have wrought out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They have overcome, and sit down with the Conqueror on His throne, as He overcame and has sat down with His Father on His throne ; and they reign with Him for ever and ever. Thus, and for such high purposes, "the same Jesus" will come again to make transcendent displays of His glory, and to fulfil the highest hopes and expectations of His saints.

III. THE MANNER OF HIS COMING.

The angelic assurance lays evident stress on the mode of the Saviour's future appearance. Not only the Person will be the same as they had formerly known, standing to them in the most endearing relations, but there would be the closest resemblance between His return and His departure. "So" would He come "in like manner" as they had "seen Him go away into heaven." He would come

again "*in a cloud*," as He went away. This was at once for concealment and manifestation. Clouds are in Scripture represented as the accompaniments of the Divine presence. They indicate, at the same time, God's special manifestation, and serve to veil and hide from creature-vision the effulgence of His majesty, and the inscrutable mystery of His nature and purposes. The tabernacle of old was filled with a cloud, when God, dwelling between the cherubim, made it His earthly abode. At the dedication of Solomon's temple, the cloud of glory so filled the house that the priests, overwhelmed with awe, could not stand to minister. The manifestation of the Saviour's glory on the mount of transfiguration was accompanied with a "bright cloud," overshadowing the chosen disciples and the celestial visitants. Clouds are the chariots of the King of glory. When the Redeemer appears as a mighty angel, descending from heaven to take part in the conflicts and trials of His two witnesses, He is "clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow"—the token of the covenant—"is upon His head." (Rev. x. 1.) And His second coming will be "with the clouds of heaven," in "power and great glory," as a Divine Deliverer,—the same who frequently manifested His presence to His church, and wrought for her great and glorious deliverance.

He shall come, attended by *holy angels*. Thus has He already appeared in Zion for blessing to His church. He appeared in Sinai "with ten thousands of His holy ones," and from "His right hand went a fiery law for them." He was "seen of angels" as He died and rose again. He went away with "twenty thousand of the chariots of God," even myriads of angels. (Ps. lxxviii. 17.) Thus, too, will He return to earth. He will come in His own and His Father's glory, and in "the glory of His mighty angels." (2 Thess. i. 7.) These bright spirits accompanying the Saviour as His royal retinue are not themselves to be judged, but they act an important part in the final judgment. They do honour to Christ, swell His triumph, and

display His glory. They are the "reapers" in "the harvest," which is "the end of the world." They come as ministering spirits to do honour to the saints, as they cordially unite with them in ascribing all worth and worthiness to the slain Lamb. (Rev. v. 11, 12.)

He will come at last with a *shout* and with the *trump of God*. "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." (Ps. xlvii. 5.) In like manner shall He descend from heaven, "with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." The "archangel" may be the Redeemer Himself—"the Head of all principality and power," or a created angel of high rank, who shall herald His coming to judgment. The loud trumpet-sound proclaims the assembling of the universe, and may be the instrumentality employed for awakening the saints that sleep in Jesus, and for changing those who are alive and remain at Christ's coming. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. xv. 52.)

The Saviour shall be *seen with admiration* at His second coming. The Apostles saw Him with wrapt wonder and astonishment ascend to heaven. While they beheld, and as they stood gazing, "He was taken up." He will come again in visible glory—the observed of all eyes, the wonder and joy of His saints. He shall be seen by them in every aspect of glorious majesty and attractive loveliness. Not only will He appear as the one grand commanding object of external brightness and glory; "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 10.) What His grace has wrought in them—His moral image now perfect, reflected by them, will be the admiration of angels and men. It will show the transforming power of His love, and will bring to Him a revenue of praise for ever.

A main design of His glorious appearance will be to *complete the blessing*. Thus He went away. "While He blessed them," and ere He had finished the blessing, He

disappeared from their sight. The angelic message assures believers that He will *so* come again as He parted from the disciples, to finish the benediction. This is indeed the great end of His coming to His saints at all times and in whatever manner. He comes in the word, in ordinances, by His Spirit, and in providences, to bless them. As the Israelitish high priest at the evening of the day of atonement, when the service of the sanctuary was finished, put on his "robes of glory and beauty," and with uplifted hands blessed the people, so will our great High Priest come forth from the "holy of holies" and complete the blessing. (Levit. xvi.) In the evening of life, He blesses the departing spirit of the believer. At the resurrection, the bodies of the saints shall receive from the Lord full blessing and blessedness. They shall be fashioned like His glorious body. (Phil. iii. 20.) The saints, raised up in glory, "shall be perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity." The bliss imparted at Christ's coming will continue and be increased throughout endless ages. It is realised in exalted communion with Christ and His saints in heaven. The redeemed shall be blessed in high fellowship with Christ and His holy angels and fellow-saints in glory. They shall be blessed to the utmost capacity of their spiritual nature; and, with enlarged faculties adapted to their exalted condition, they shall enjoy this felicity for ever. God in covenant will Himself be their rest and portion, uninterrupted and inexhaustible, throughout eternity. "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." At His first advent, after He had gathered His disciples, He was parted from them in suffering and death. At His glorious future appearance, all His saints shall be gathered together to Him. None of them shall be left behind, and they shall be parted from Him no more. Received to be with Him in glory, they shall go no more out. The same precious Saviour, who redeemed them by His blood, will present them faultless before the throne of

His glory. The full end of His coming will then be accomplished in their sharing perfect blessedness with their Lord for ever and ever.

IV. OUR SPECIAL DUTIES IN RELATION TO CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.

This declaration of the angelic messengers supplies a test of our true character, tries our hopes, and shows what will be our final condition. It is required that—

1. We should have *steadfast faith in His coming*. The world is still unbelieving, as it was in the apostolic times. Scoffers walking after their own lusts say, in the last days, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.) There are the strongest grounds for heartfelt belief in the Saviour's future glorious appearance. He has *promised* that He will come again, and His faithfulness is pledged to fulfil the promise. His work on earth, His ascension to glory, His work in heaven, and His government in providence, are all intimately connected with Christ's coming to judgment. "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 31.) The second coming of the Lord, at the end of the present dispensation, must ever form an essential part of the Christian's creed, and should be a fundamental article of his surest and most sacred belief.

2. To make constant *diligent preparation for the Saviour's coming*. Our Lord frequently insists on this theme in His personal ministry. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." (Matt. xxv. 13.) "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding." (Luke xii. 36.) The Apostles often exhibit the Redeemer's second

coming as the strongest motive to practical duties, and urge Christians to look, wait, and prepare for it, and to regard it as an unfailing source of spiritual consolation and joy. "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?" (2 Pet. iii. 11.) "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Pet. iii. 14.)

3. It should be the object of *our earnest desire and joyful hope*. Proportioned to the love which we bear to the risen Saviour will be our interest in His work in heaven, and our fervent desire for His second coming. "The saints that shall hereafter receive "the crown of righteousness" love His appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 10.) They "look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.) All that forms to the renewed heart the object of highest spiritual desire and most joyful hope is concentrated in Christ's second coming—unstained holiness, full victory, and perfect bliss; all that is excellent and glorious in the kingdom of God, and in fellowship with God and the saints, can only then be fully realised. Should not therefore our spiritual desires overflow toward it? should not our hopes all rest upon it?

4. This strong expectation should influence *our whole spirit and conduct in all labours and trials*. Our obligation to the cross of Christ should ever lead us to live as the ransomed of the Lord. Our faith and hope in His coming again should animate and comfort us in His service. It should "purify our hearts, as God is pure," raise us above the world, and help us to overcome it, and draw away our affections to things above, where Christ sits enthroned at the right hand of God. It should ever supply a constraining motive to the faithful performance of all duties to God and to man. Resting on the assurance that our Master

will come again and reckon with His servants, we should "occupy" faithfully till He come, spending our talents for the promotion of His glory. We are called to "hold fast" what we have of profession and privilege till He come—(Rev. iii. 11); to endure trials in the near prospect of His appearance; and to wait for the glory to be revealed. Influenced by such assured hopes, we shall walk before God in all meekness and lowliness of mind; we shall shine as lights in the world; and, as joint-heirs with Christ, rejoice at all times in hope of the glory of God.

IN CONCLUSION.

This subject calls us—

First—Solemnly to *consider and improve our Lord's ascension to glory*. We should lay to heart the manner and purpose for which He ascended. We should follow Him in thought and affection to the door in heaven, through which He has passed to His mediatorial throne. He parted from His disciples remaining on earth with tokens of the tenderest affection, and with hands uplifted to bestow the blessing. He entered heaven and assumed His seat upon the throne, that He might send down plentiful rich gifts to the sons of men. He went up to glory that He might introduce the mission of the Spirit, and to exercise all power and authority in heaven and earth for the benefit of His redeemed church. He went to prepare a place in glory for His redeemed, and to bring them to the many mansions in the Father's house at the appointed time. Like the disciples, when the Lord was taken up, we should worship Him as truly Divine, and entitled to all homage and adoration. We are called, as they were, now that He has gone to the Father, ever to regard Him as the Elder Brother, and fellow-saints as brethren—fellow-heirs of glory. As *they* returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and remained engaged daily in spiritual worship and fellowship, so should we abound in prayer and praise to God continually. Our Lord's ascension should lead us to trust

Him for all our salvation; should stimulate to liveliness and fervour in religious exercises; and should bring us especially to have our country and citizenship in heaven, whence we wait and look for the Saviour's coming to manifest fully His glory, and to perfect all that concerns His people's salvation.

Secondly—Let us see that “this same Jesus” is now to us “*all in all*.” We should embrace and rely on Him as our Elder Brother and Friend—as our Shepherd, Husband, Head, and Lord. We should know Him as standing to us in every endearing relation. He is even now engaged on our behalf. He “appears in the presence of God for us.” As His people's Well-Beloved, He will come again. Having received the kingdom, He will come forth from the most holy place to complete their salvation and bless them. It greatly behoves us to consider whether in reality He is ours by a vital union, by our own real choice, and by abiding in Him. He who leads and feeds His redeemed, and who ever manifests full and inexhaustible compassion towards them, will in due time come to save them. He will gloriously complete what He has begun. He, the First, will also be the Last of His people's privileges and joys—the Alpha and Omega of all their praise. In appropriating trust and joyful hope of His appearance, the saint, with fervent desire pleads, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” (Song ii. 17.) Triumphant in Him, believers who love His appearance exclaim on the day of His coming, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” (Isa. xxv. 9.)

Thirdly—We should frequently consider *what the Saviour's coming again will be to ourselves*. He will certainly come at length and appear visibly to all. His future manifestation will be to the shame and everlasting confusion of His enemies. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed

from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. i. 7, 8.) To His faithful servants His second coming will be unspeakably glorious, attractive, and blessed. They shall be raised up in glory and received to be with Him. They shall behold and realise His glory. They shall be brought "with gladness and rejoicing" to "the palace of the King," to abide for ever. Their sorrows and trials are at an end. All their highest hopes are realised and vastly surpassed. They shall fully see and share all the glory of the Redeemer's throne and kingdom. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." (Rev. xxii. 3, 4.)

Lastly—We invite and welcome *you to the Lord's table* that you may get a clearer view of *the connection between the Saviour's ascension to heaven and His second coming*. He went away in the attitude and act of blessing. He ascended to glory to reign and intercede, that He might confer enlarged gifts upon His redeemed, and prepare them for the full enjoyment of still higher blessings at His second coming. In the sacred ordinance we are called to realise an earnest and foretaste of the glory to be revealed. The grand manifestation which will be made of the Redeemer's person and covenant, of His offices and relations, at His final glorious appearance, are to be apprehended by faith now. The Bridegroom is here; the marriage supper is prepared; and they who are ready, "the wise virgins," with their lamps trimmed, are bid welcome to go forth with the Master of the feast, and to lofty and endearing fellowship with Him in the wedding chamber, the "doors being shut." We are required to show forth the death of the Saviour "till He come;" to continue the ordinance till the end of the dispensation; and to observe it as a preparation and antepast of His coming in glory. In the feast of His love He is revealed as the Lamb slain; so should we now be-

hold and welcome Him. We should stand with the Lamb and His company on Mount Zion, encompassed with His glory, and having the Father's name inscribed on our foreheads. At His second coming He will appear as the Captain of salvation, bringing many sons to glory; as a crowned Conqueror, having vanquished all His enemies, and achieved complete victory. As the Husband and Head of His ransomed church, He will come to bring home His elect and sanctified bride. In the sacramental feast, He appears in the same distinctive characters and relations. He is displayed as an exalted King, and it is "the day of His espousals"—the "day of the gladness of His heart." The daughters of Zion should go forth to behold Him adorned with the crown with which His mother crowned Him. We are called to own Him as our King; to cast the crowns of our privilege and honour at His feet; and to place the crown of our salvation on His head, He alone being found fit to wear it, and worthy to bear the undivided glory. This is the best time and place to obtain glimpses of His glory, and to receive earnest of the bliss of His second coming. Following Him to the ordinance, we should seek now to share in the blessing which the Apostles received from the uplifted hands of the ascending Saviour. Ere we part from the scene, we should believe with the heart the angelic announcement concerning the same almighty compassionate Saviour, returning in like manner as He went away. This ordinance is designed to be to His friends the pledge and seal that He is coming, and that He will in a short time appear for their unspeakable joy. To every one who believes on His name, and loves His appearance, He gives the assurance. "I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John xiv. 3.) In the full view of what that promised advent will be for the manifestation of His glory and our completed salvation, should we not with fervent desire and joyful hearts exclaim, "EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS?"

THE TREE OF LIFE.

REVELATION xxii. 2---“ In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

WHETHER the two last chapters of the Apocalypse are designed to refer to the Millennial state of the church on earth, or to the glorified condition of the church triumphant in heaven, has been a subject of considerable discussion. Those who believe in Christ's personal manifestation prior to the Millennium, and in His reign on earth with His risen saints during that period, very generally explain the bright visions of these chapters as referring to the glorious condition of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth at the close of the dispensation.

There is, we think, satisfactory evidence that the proper and full reference of the elevated description is to the heavenly state. The scenes recorded are *subsequent* to the general judgment and the consignment of the wicked to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. If these are not laid in heaven, then, while the final punishment of the damned is distinctly declared, the visions of this comprehensive prophecy would be completed without any exhibition of the eternal felicity of the righteous. Besides, the language of the description is too lofty and expressive to be applied to any state on earth, in which the remains of sin and sorrow exist, or in which any return to them is to be feared. It is, however, ever to be borne in mind that the condition of the saints on earth and in heaven differs only *in degree*, and not *in kind*. Grace is the bud and germ of their character and happiness, and glory is the full fruit and crown. The “grace” which shall be given to

the righteous at the future revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 13), is the perfection of the saints' gracious state in heavenly glory. The "things that are above" must be partly known and experienced here, if our "affections are set" on them; we must "seek" them, and have a growing acquaintance with them, in order to put on a meetness for their full possession, and to come to the everlasting enjoyment of them in heaven.

The two opening verses of this sublime chapter present a singularly attractive view of the fountain and source of the felicity of the redeemed here and in the world to come. The Apostle, when in the Spirit, saw in vision "a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal," issuing forth and flowing onward from "the throne of God and of the Lamb." This is the emblem of the blessings of grace and salvation, that impart, sustain, and perfect spiritual and eternal life. Their unfathomable and inexhaustible source is God Himself—the God of all mercy and grace. They come to sinners in the dispensation of the eternal covenant, through the administration of the Mediator, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit. While they diffuse purity, refreshment, and life wherever they go in overflowing abundance, they are like a magnificent river whose full volume in its course knows no diminution or exhaustion.

The second prominent object in the state of heavenly felicity is declared to be "THE TREE OF LIFE" in "the midst of the street of the city," and on "either side of the river." Everything endearing and attractive is held forth by this emblem; and all the elements of the saints' bliss that are enumerated in the subsequent verses have an intimate and necessary connection with this central and commanding object. Saints whom we once knew and loved on earth sat at times while here under the shade of "the apple tree," and did eat with delight of its pleasant fruit. They now see—without a medium or a cloud, the grand object of their blessed hope. Their perfect happiness is to rest under the covert of its branches, and to eat of its

mellow and constantly renewed fruit, as they experience the full virtue of its health-giving leaves. May we have the foretaste of this felicity now, and be prepared at length for its full and everlasting enjoyment!

THE TREE OF LIFE AND ITS POSITION—ITS FRUIT AND PERPETUAL PRODUCTIVENESS—and ITS LEAVES, WITH THEIR MEDICINAL VIRTUE, when duly considered, will show the glorious source and nature of the future felicity of the redeemed.

1. THE TREE OF LIFE.

In the designation of this illustrious object there is an obvious reference to man's primeval abode in the earthly paradise, and to His original happy condition. This text supplies a singular proof of the connection of the Old and New Testaments, and of the unity of the Bible. What is mentioned in the earliest part of the inspired record in the book of Genesis, is stated with increased fulness in the close of the canon of revelation. Man's state of innocence is connected with his recovery from sin, and the happy condition of the redeemed in glory. The primeval grant (Gen. ii. 9) of access to the "tree of life," or "lives,"* was a Divine memorial of life bestowed by God; and, as connected with the first covenant, was to Adam "a sign and seal" of immortal life. By the Fall paradise was forfeited, and the way to the tree of life completely barred to man against any future work of obedience which might procure for him admittance. This glorious object disappears and is lost sight of till the reign of sin and death is ended. With paradise regained through the redemption of Christ, the tree of life is again seen in bright contrast with the type in Eden. The tree in the earthly paradise was only a sign and pledge to be seen; and its fruit seems not to have been eaten in the state of innocence;—in man's fall and expulsion from the garden, all

* This is the expression in Hebrew.

access to it was denied for ever. But in heaven, the tree excelling in glory is the real aliment of eternal life. Millions of saved ones are brought into the nearest connection with it; under its shade they perpetually repose, and of its luscious fruit they partake for ever.

The tree of life was to our first parents a sacramental seal and means of life. *Augustine* justly remarks, "In the other trees of the garden granted to Adam for food there was nourishment; in this there is a sacrament, the visible sign of an invisible grace." It was designed to be a pledge and confirmation of the promise of life to Adam and his posterity. So long as he stood in innocency, this conspicuous object, flourishing in fruit and beauty, assured him of the blessed reward of obedience. When he sinned and fell, and life was forfeited, the promise of a better covenant was ratified by sacrificial blood. As our first parents beheld the golden fruit, the product of vital power in the tree, it confirmed to them the Divine assurance that they, and all whom they represented, would live for ever. All happiness was connected with this seal of their obedience; it was to them the guarantee of eternal life. The grand reason why, when man fell, the way to the tree of life was closed, lay here. When one is cast out of the covenant he has no right to partake of the seal. In the heavenly paradise the tree of life is no longer a sacrament. It is life itself in its blessed substance and full enjoyment. It is that to which all previous means and prefigurations looked forward—the blessed end of all obedience, satisfying the highest desires of the soul, and imperilling no subsequent forfeiture for ever. (Rev. xxii. 14.)

This tree of life is *Christ and all salvation-blessings* in Him. The designation is most significant. Christ Jesus is the Living One—(Job xix. 25; Rev. i. 18), having all life in Himself, and being the full and inexhaustible Fountain to all to whom life is imparted. In Him both the tree of knowledge and the tree of life, in their full substance, are found. This is "life eternal, to know thee.

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent." The fulness of all blessed life is in Him. It is His to impart, sustain, and perfect the spiritual life of His people. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John i. 4.) Our "life is hid with Christ in God," (Col. iii. 3)—hid in its source and spring, and secured against all that would injure it. When Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall He bring forth the internal spiritual life of His saints into bright and glorious manifestation. "We shall appear with Him in glory." "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." (Isa. iv. 2.) Christ Jesus, the Head of the saints in glory, and life in its perfection in Him, and issuing forth from Him, appear as a fair and beautiful tree, blossoming and laden with precious fruit in the sight of the angels. The first tree in the earthly paradise was feeble and fading; it had life only as imparted to it, and was but an appointed external means of blessing. The tree in heaven has life in the largest sense in the internal principle, and it endures for ever. It is the conception of some eminent divines that the angels were not confirmed in life and blessedness till Christ ascended to glory.* However this may be, our abundant comfort and joy are that all spiritual and eternal blessings are in the Mediator's fulness, and that they are all communicated from it to the redeemed. He is the Original Source, the First Cause of their life. He purchased, imparts, and preserves it; and its perfection in glory is enjoyed in the nearest fellowship with Him for ever. The life of the saints—justification, sanctification, comfort, and heavenly felicity—is in Him alone, who is the Head of vital influence and glory. When the living branches of the True Vine have attained their mature vigour, and are laden with the prosperous fruits of righteousness, they will be

* Jonathan Edwards.

seen united to the life-giving Tree; deriving all vital influence from Him, they appear as "trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that He might be glorified." (Isa. lxi. 3.)

Of this tree of life the saints enjoyed while here *its shade and fruit*. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song ii. 3.) Christ Jesus is the constant shade of His people; their shelter and protection from the storm and tempest; their comfort and refreshment in the day of trial. As the cooling shade does not wholly exclude the light of the sun, but only tempers his beams, and enables us to enjoy their warmth and softened splendour, so the shadow of Christ's cross secures from the consuming heat of Jehovah's wrath; and the refreshing influences of His Spirit fill the soul with strong consolation. The spiritual privileges which believers enjoy are fruits of the Saviour's love and purchase; and these He communicates to His people in rich abundance. The protection and refreshment of the shade are inseparable from the enjoyment of the fruit. We neither eat the fruit of the apple tree, nor taste its sweetness, till we betake ourselves to the shade. And, on the other hand, we never flee under it without obtaining strength and refreshment. As the wearied pilgrim in the East, coming to sit down under the apple tree, is delighted with the beauty of its appearance, the protection of its shade, its rich fragrance, and pleasant and nourishing fruit, so the convinced sinner and the tried believer find all rest and delight in Christ's person. His all-covering righteousness, and His precious fruits—the earnest of heavenly glory. Like Joseph, as exhibited in the benediction of his father—(Gen. xlix. 22), our Elder Brother is a "fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall" that separates us from the world invisible. Its native soil is the heavenly country; its fruits, gathered on earth, on this side the wall, are sweet to the

taste. They are the same that shall throughout eternity satisfy the redeemed. Under this safe and refreshing shade the soul experiences delight, even in temptation, and affliction and sorrow. Here there is calm and joyful rest, while the Lord blesses the provision of His people, and satisfies His poor with bread.

In heaven, the Saviour, as the Tree of Life, is constantly with His people, by His *immediate and glorious presence*. It stands on "either side of the river," and in "the midst of the street" of the city. The vivid representation heightens the beauty, and shows the abundance of the provision that is made for the felicity of the redeemed. The figure of a single tree is not sufficient to set forth adequately the fulness of life and blessing that is in Christ. These are everywhere to be enjoyed. There are trees laden with richest fruits lining the streets, and growing on the banks of the river. When the redeemed walk on the streets of gold and glass; when they come to the river of salvation, they are constantly near this glorious tree, refreshed by its shade, and nourished by its mellow fruit. As in Ezekiel's vision, there were very many trees on the banks of the river of sanctuary waters—living, verdant, and fruit-bearing, emblematical of growth and fertility, so, in the heavenly country, Christ, the Lord of saints, is everywhere seen and enjoyed as the "Centre and Source" of perfect and boundless felicity. This is the pre-eminent happiness of heaven. God dwells among His saints. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." (Rev. xxii. 3, 4.) All is combined in the representation that constitutes beauty, or contributes to happiness.

Angels and redeemed men for ever behold, admire, and partake of the fruit of the tree of life. This is the most conspicuous object in the heavenly paradise. Unlike the sacramental sign in Eden, which was singular and occupied a fixed position, this is the common tree in Immanuel's

land. It is the grand central object, while yet it is everywhere to be met with in the vast world of bliss. The heavenly country is ever represented as a city, resplendent with the glory of God, and thronged with inhabitants. So glorified saints and holy angels, however active, however diversified their employments, dwell continually under the refreshing shade of the life-giving tree, and eat of its luscious fruit. Hence results their perfect and unspeakable felicity. By constantly beholding the tree of life, and partaking of it, eternal life and its countless blessings are enjoyed and increased. The saints walk with the Saviour "in white." From His glorious presence they go no more out. In Him they have life, and have it more abundantly. The Lamb in the midst of the throne feeds them, and "leads them unto living fountains of water: and God wipes away all tears from their eyes." (Rev. vii. 17.)

II. ITS PRODUCTIVENESS AND FRUITS.

The original terms are more expressive and significant than in our version. The supplemental words "manner" and "and" mar the sense, and are unnecessary. *Abundance*, and not *variety* of fruit, is the subject of representation. The tree yields *twelve fruits*—not immature, but of the ripened harvest, producing them every month. It perpetually bears them: the rich supply never fails.

These are the precious fruits of the Saviour's *love, atonement, and intercession*. His love from eternity is sovereign, unchangeable, and efficacious. All that infinite love devises and brings forth is supplied to those who are gathered under the shade of the tree of life. And this is to them ever fresh, and renewed perpetually. "Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them to the end." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (John xiii. 1; Jer. xxxi. 3.) The love of Christ led to His atonement. His death in the room of the guilty and lost was the noon-tide manifestation of His infinite and un-

speaking love. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) The fruits of His death for the ungodly are all purchased blessings. The saints are bought with a price—redeemed from the curse; and pardon, peace, the earnest of glory, are theirs by a perfect and indefensible title. The intercession of Christ, founded on His death, secures the bestowment of these blessings. He has gone to heaven to send the Comforter, that He may reveal and apply the benefits of His mediation. All the spiritual privileges that He confers, and the graces that He imparts, are the "fruits of the Spirit"—to saints while here the "first-fruits," the "earnest" of future bliss in heaven. The supply is in richest abundance and is never-failing. "The branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." (Isa. iv. 2.) "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 14.)

This fruit is in *great variety—adapted to the tastes of all that are saved*. Though it is chiefly the abundance and the perpetuity of the fruit that are declared in the figurative language of the text, it is implied, at the same time, that there is much variety in the provision made for the happiness of the saints in heaven. The vessels of glory are of different capacities, though each is filled to overflowing. There are degrees in bliss of the redeemed made perfect. "One star differeth from another star in glory." (1 Cor. xv. 41.) Happiness consists in the adaptation of objects to the nature and disposition of the person with whom they are brought into the nearest contact and the closest relation. In the fruits of the tree of life in heaven, there is enough to minister the highest intellectual enjoyment. All holy affections find their appropriate gratification. There is much variety in the works of active benevolence in which the saints in heaven are engaged, and for which they are fitted by their training on earth.

They serve in the temple above, and rest not day nor night from their work of adoring praise. The "rivers of pleasure," which are at God's right hand, bring life and refreshment in diversified and endless forms to the saints in glory, while the "fulness of joy" contains in it all that is fitted to elevate and gratify the intellectual and moral nature advanced to its highest perfection. "When I awake I shall see Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness." (Ps. xvii. 15.)

Hence, too, is derived *all the nourishment of the life of saints in grace and glory*. Christ Jesus is not only "the life" in Himself, but likewise the nourishment and end of His people's life. We eat of His fruit now, and it is sweet to the taste. To "him that overcometh" it is granted to eat of the "hidden manna." (Rev. ii. 17.) The "true bread of life," which comes down from heaven, gives life to the world. He that partakes of it, lives by it, and shall live for ever. As the branches derive vital influence from the trunk, so from this source are their increase and fruit. The saints' perfection, their "higher life" in glory, is realised in union and fellowship with the Redeemer throughout eternity. Saints become meet to partake of the precious fruits of the tree of life by the work of faith, and in the way of holy obedience. "He that believeth hath everlasting life." He has it now in the germ by appropriation and begun possession. He receives the title, and according as faith is exercised and strengthened, he obtains "the seal" and "earnest" of glory. The end and triumph of faith are the entrance into life eternal. The crown of life is awarded to the overcomer. Faith is an overcoming principle, and prayer is the suitable posture of the successful warrior. As Jacob, wrestling with the angel, had power and prevailed, so the victories of faith are achieved by the prayers of the suppliant and the cries and tears of the penitent. Living faith leads to all holy obedience. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the

tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. xxii. 14.)* Our first act of new obedience is faith, as the grand Gospel commandment is to believe on Him whom the Father has sent. Our right or privilege to partake of the tree of life arises, not from our doings, but solely from what Christ has done for us. When our service on earth shall have been finished, and our work of faith and labour of love have been completed, an "abundant entrance" is ministered. The "flaming sword" and "cherubim" that guarded the way to the tree of life in Eden, are seen now in the atoning work of the Redeemer. Instead of shutting out the sinner and expelling him from paradise, they show the way now fully opened. Christ Jesus is the true Shekinah—the glory dwelling between the cherubim. "This is the gate of God, into which the righteous shall enter." On the footing of the Saviour's merits, the ransomed return to Zion, and dwell in the city of God. The Lamb is the light, the temple, and unclouded glory of heaven. Those who faithfully served Him here, however humble their position and unnoticed their service, are welcomed to His joy, and share in His life of glory and blessedness for evermore.

III. THE LEAVES OF THE TREE.

The "leaves" are health-giving, not merely to recover those to whom they are applied from sickness and pain, but to secure them from death. The leaves are *medicinal*. In Ezekiel's vision—(chap. xlvii. 12), the trees that lined the banks of the river had "their fruit for meat, and their leaf for medicine." From the abodes of the blessed sickness and death are for ever excluded. "The inhabitant shall not say I am sick: the people that dwell therein

* Alford's reading of this verse, sustained by MSS., and by the Syriac and Vulgate, is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have power over the tree of life." This takes away all pretext for the notion of salvation by works.

shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. xxxiii. 24.) All the parts of the tree—its sap, its branches, its leaves, its fruit—are instinct with life. Its leaves were the effectual remedy for disease of whatever kind. The dwellers in that blessed world are rescued from death, and freed from the mortal malady under which they once laboured. All their diseases and pains have been healed, and life everlasting, without pain, or weakness, or aught that is mortal, is now fully imparted. As they approach the tree of life, and eat of its pleasant fruits, the sight of its leaves fills them with grateful remembrance of deliverance from spiritual maladies; and the enjoyment of vigorous health and life is enhanced to them from contrast with the diseases and pains from which they are recovered.

These leaves of the tree of life are *gracious manifestations of Christ in the word and ordinances*. The holy profession of Christians is the leaf unwithering. (Ps. i. 3.) The doctrines, promises, gracious offers, and discoveries of the Gospel are sovereign remedies for sin, and for all the maladies that afflict human society. "He sent forth His word and healed them." (Ps. cvii. 20.) There is purifying virtue in Divine ordinances; and gracious curative influences go forth from the sanctuary. "It shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fishes, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh." (Ezek. xlvii. 9.) Like the salt cast by the prophet into the fountain at Jericho, so these leaves of the tree are restorative and health-giving. (2 Kings ii. 20.) As the tree shown to Moses turned the bitter waters at Marah into sweetness, so the manifestations of Christ, in the word and ordinances, sweeten afflictions, and render them productive of "the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

The *nations of the saved* have all been thus healed. The church's office and work are to present the word of life to

the nations of the earth, that their moral and spiritual maladies may be healed. The great commission is to "preach the Gospel to every creature," and to go and "teach all nations." The elect are thus gathered out of the nations of the earth. Rulers are brought to own the authority of Messiah, the Prince, and to promote, by national acts, His glory. "Kings become nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers, to the church." (Isa. xlix. 23.) Political bodies and nations, as such, gather together to serve the highest Lord. "They shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it." (Rev. xxi. 26.)

This is the *only effectual remedy for manifold national diseases*. The leaves of the tree of life not only heal the spiritual maladies of individuals, but they are likewise the appointed means of removing the evils that afflict the nations, and of bringing to them health and prosperity. Notwithstanding the march of modern improvement, and the salutary changes that have recently taken place in society, national evils are yet great and manifold. Many nations are still in heathen darkness, and millions of their population are sunk in idolatry and superstition, with all their degrading customs and abominable vices. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." (Ps. lxxiv. 20.) Even throughout Christendom, national sins that evoke national judgments greatly prevail. Idolatry, ignorance, error, vice, and ungodliness, generally characterize the nations that are without the Gospel. Their laws are opposed to the word of God—many of their customs are enslaving and demoralising. Public authority and legislation, not owning subjection to the Divine government and the "higher law," confess themselves incompetent to heal the breaches of the social system. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." (Isa. i. 5.) The appliances of philosophy and science, and more human policy, can work no effectual cure, because they are unable to reach the root of the

evil in the heart ; and they are wholly inadequate to dry up the fountain of human wickedness. "They have healed the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace ; when there is no peace." "Is there no balm in Gilead ; is there no physician there ? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered ?" (Jor. viii. 22.) This potent remedy is only found in the health-giving leaves of the tree of life. The word of God has already wrought healing throughout the nations. The Gospel has brought a revenue of glory to God, by proclaiming "peace on earth, and good will to men." In its yet very limited spread throughout pagan nations, it has put an end to many foul rites of heathenism, and caused idol temples to be forsaken. It has arrested the progress of unnatural wars, put down infanticide and the burning of widows, abolished slavery and serfdom, raised women from social degradation, and mitigated many other national evils. In Christian lands it has inaugurated and carried forward schemes of philanthropy, elevated public spirit, and brought legislation into nearer accordance with the laws of heaven. What is yet required to remove great national evils that remain, to avert deserved judgments, and to render nations prosperous and happy ? Is it not that people and their rulers should gather together under the shade of the tree of life, to eat of its fruit, and to seek to its leaves for the remedy of all the evils that afflict them ? "I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more." (Ezek. xxxiv. 29.) The word of truth assumed as the basis of national policy, the Gospel fully proclaimed, and its spirit and principles pervading society, will bring blessings innumerable to the nations. Christ's presence and power in the word and holy ordinances diffuse health and vitality throughout the laws and institutions of the State. They are a potent remedy for its numerous maladies—the grand means of conferring unspeakable blessings upon

civil society. The great commission of the ascended Redeemer has been already, to a large extent, executed ; and, in the future day of enlarged effort and blessing, it will be through the universal spread of the word, and the power of the Gospel, that nations, as such, will submit to the dominion of Messiah, the Prince. Then promise and prophecy shall have their joyful fulfilment. "Men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call Him blessed." "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Ps. lxxii. 17 ; Isa. ii. 3.) "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea : in summer and winter it shall be." (Zech. xiv. 8.)

Our grand duty is to *apply this provision* for the healing of the nations. While the Spirit alone can apply the word and ordinances effectually, the church is the instrument to which the cure is entrusted, that it may be brought forth for restoring health and life. All the remedies of mere human device—education, refinement, political measures—are of no value while this is undervalued and neglected. Our eminent concern, if we would benefit society and bless the nations, is to know and witness for the truth, and to diffuse it universally. We should, by fervent prayer, call down the Spirit, and depend upon His promised and powerful influences to heal national diseases, and to diffuse restorative virtue throughout society. Prayer for rulers and people is a *chief means* of blessing. "Seek the peace of the city, and pray unto the Lord for it : for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." (Jer. xxix. 7.) Like those who experienced the healing power of the Saviour in the days of His flesh, we should return to give Him thanks for blessings received : we should tell to others the greatness of His power and compassion for their spiritual benefit. We should declare His doings among the people, and labour that the nations of the earth should submit to His sceptre, and become partakers of the abundant bless-

ings of His kingdom. This is the ultimate destiny and glory of the nations. "All kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." (Ps. lxxii. 11.) "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." (Ps. lxxvii. 6.)

IX CONCLUSION.

The grand INVITATION of the Gospel may be presented from this representation. The tree of life, in the midst of the street of the city of God, and on either side of the river, is the great object of Gospel manifestation. It is to be seen everywhere, and to be everywhere enjoyed. The sword of avenging justice has been turned aside; the cherubic guard, instead of opposing, point now to an entrance fully provided. Christ Jesus is all the life, as He is the way to the Father—the highway to heaven. What a glorious and all-sufficient Saviour does the Gospel reveal! "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John v. 11.) He is the true "life manifested," which we are encouraged to see, hear, handle with our hands, and enjoy in full possession and actual experience. Christ the Lord is more than paradise regained. He is the grand object of attraction, which makes heaven all that it is to the saints—their life, their rest, the fountain, substance, and end of their eternal bliss. Often should we earnestly inquire, "Have we come to the tree of life, and have the health imparted by its leaves, and the life-sustaining power that comes from its fruit, entered our souls?" To it we should ever seek for shelter from the storm, for refreshing shade, and for the food that nourishes up to life eternal. If we have found it, we should dwell under its shadow; live on its pleasant fruit; and, feeling that we owe all to this wondrous provision, we should delight in recommending it to others for spiritual life and blessing.

Our main duty is, while we *live near the tree of life*, and

feast on its fruits, to *have recourse to its leaves*—the manifestations of the grace and power of Christ for the spiritual healing of ourselves and others. Even believers themselves greatly need the curative influence which flows from the tree of life. They need a Divine remedy for bodily diseases and pains, that they may themselves be disciplinary and medicinal. They require backslidings healed, pollution and weakness removed, and spiritual soundness given. The leaves of the tree are sufficient to heal all the diseases of the soul. The invitations, promises, and gracious discoveries of Christ in the word, are adequate to remove every spiritual malady, and to restore to perfect soundness. Our great work is constantly to betake ourselves to this gracious provision, and to be willing instruments in applying it to others, whether individuals or communities. If a destructive epidemic was raging, and knowing a sovereign cure, we did not make it known, we would be deservedly held criminal. Much more, when a fatal spiritual malady is universally prevailing, and we have in our hands a tried and potent remedy, are we under obligation to apply it to save individuals and nations from destruction. This demands effort, prayer, and self-sacrifice; but it has, at the same time, a glorious reward. It is honourable and blessed to be instruments of bringing others to the great Physician; and to be, in any degree, healers of the nations, is to share with the Redeemer in His great work of universal benevolence, and to be partakers of His glory, when “the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory.” (Jer. iv. 2.)

Finally—It behoves us to *set our hearts fully* upon this chief object of happiness in the heavenly paradise. Christ Jesus is the Omega, as He is the Alpha of the saints’ praise and felicity. There the day has dawned, and clouds and shadows have for ever passed away. We see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face, in perfect and unclouded vision. The most conspicuous and

attractive object in the heavenly city is "the Tree of life." With the full river of salvation issuing from its source, beneath the throne of God and the Lamb, and diffusing blessings in countless and never-failing streams, lining all its banks on either side, is the life-imparting tree. The tribes of God from all lands—the nations of the saved, are clustered around it; to it the redeemed from among men owe all deliverance, and health, and innumerable blessings. Angels behold with wonder the Saviour at the head of the ransomed host, and join with them in rapturous praises to Him by whom they are redeemed and brought home to glory. Angels are "elect" and confirmed through Christ: they are gathered into "one family," which in heaven and earth is named after Him; and they willingly swell the chorus of exulting saints. A principal part of the unrivalled beauty and transcendent excellency of the heavenly state is here. Christ is seen as the Head and Centre of the life and happiness of the redeemed and of holy angels. They are gathered into the closest union and most endeared fellowship with Him. His glory is diffused around them in rich effulgence; and they are receiving fresh streams of life and joy from Him continually. This is the consummation of the happiness of the saints in heaven. The beatific vision which they behold is Christ in their nature, as the fountain of life. The beatific fruition of God consists in their eating continually the plentiful, varied, and ripened fruits of the tree of life. Thus are they led to "living fountains of waters;" to the source and summit of heavenly felicity; and all their tears are for ever wiped away. To Him who led and fed them through their life on earth, and who now conducts them to the full and inexhaustible source of bliss, they ascribe the praise of all their happiness for ever. Far transcending the joys of the earthly paradise in innocency, the ransomed of the Lord exult in life, in union, and fellowship with Him who died that they might live, and who shares with them the blessedness of the en-

joyment of God throughout eternity. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and He made a kingdom, even priests unto God and His Father, to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever."* (John. xiv. 19; Rev. i. 5, 6.)

* This is the more precise and expressive rendering of the most ancient Manuscripts.

THE MASTER'S COMING AND CALL.

JOHN xi. 28—"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

THE scene to which this incident and these words introduce us is one of the most affecting and instructive that occurred during our Lord's personal ministry on earth. The family at Bethany had been plunged into deep sorrow by the death of Lazarus. Though it is recorded that "Jesus loved Lazarus, and Martha and Mary," yet it is said that when He was informed of Lazarus' sickness by a special message from his sisters, "He abode two days in the same place where He was." His thoughts, we cannot doubt, were about the afflicted family, and His deepest sympathy was with the sufferer; but He did not interpose for their relief, and his conduct in remaining at a distance seemed to indicate that He was indifferent to their distress. It was only when He knew that the crisis had come that He repaired, in company with His disciples, to the house of mourning, to comfort the bereaved, and to display His glorious power in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

As Jesus approached the village, Martha, hasty and impetuous, went forth to meet Him, to unbosom to Him her sorrows, and to seek from Him that support and consolation which she felt that He alone could give. In tender compassion, He spoke to her words of gracious assurance and hope concerning her brother. Especially did He set forth His own exalted character as the "resurrection and the life," and the privileges in life and in death of them that believe on His name. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though

he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever believeth in Me shall never die." (Ver. 25, 26.)

It is related that when Martha hastened to meet the Saviour, Mary, her sister, either uninformed of His approach, or overwhelmed with sorrow, "sat still in the house." When Martha had heard the consolatory words of the Redeemer, and had avouched her faith in Him, as the promised Messiah and a Divine Saviour, she hastened to her sister secretly, and invited her to come with her to Him who had declared so fully His gracious character, and relieved her distress. Having herself received instruction and comfort from Christ, it was natural that she should seek that her sister should share with her the same consolation. It may be that the Saviour, in the depth of His tender sympathy, had inquired respecting Mary; but whether He called for her in so many words, or whether Martha's invitation only meant that His presence made a demand for her attendance upon Him, it is unimportant to determine. The altered spirit of Martha, once restless and "cumbered about many things," is noteworthy. The time was when she would have called Mary from the feet of Jesus to assist her in household duties. She manifests a totally different spirit and way now. A season of affliction and solemn bereavement had taught her the vanity of worldly cares. A ray of spiritual comfort from the Saviour's gracious words had penetrated her heart, and her first impulse was to make her sister a sharer of her joy. The invitation of Martha was *secret*, as of the company in the house of mourning there may have been some who were unfriendly to Christ, and she would have no hindrance interposed to prevent her immediate compliance. Her joy was too full to be declared to all. The call announced, as joy-inspiring news, the arrival and nearness of the most loving and compassionate Master, and it intimated that by a special message. He invited her into His presence. Thus those who have had their troubles alleviated by Christ, who have heard in the heart His

gracious words, and to whom He has manifested His glory, are under a constraining obligation to call others into His presence, that they may become partakers of the same holy privilege and joy. We regard this as God's message addressed to us individually this day, which, too, we are to speak to one another. May we know the reality of the Saviour's coming, hear His call inviting us to Himself, and, like Mary, may we be enabled to "arise quickly," and, leaving all else, come to Him for help and salvation. In dependence on His promised grace we speak of—

I. THE MASTER COMING.

The good news of the Gospel, the glad tidings of salvation, are contained in the announcement made to every sinner: "THE MASTER IS COME, AND CALLETH FOR THEE." This is the burden of all the gracious messages of the word. Thus He speaks in ordinances and by providences. The office and work of the Holy Spirit render these messages effectual; and as He brings the word home with power to the heart, He makes the person to whom it is spoken feel that He is individually called to come to Jesus.

He is an *all-powerful, condescending, and good Master* who calls. The original designation denotes a *teacher*. He is the "great teacher" sent from God. He is the prophet, interpreter, and witness of the covenant. He teaches by His word and Spirit, and makes wise unto salvation. He is an "instructor of babes," who "guides the meek in judgment," and "teaches the meek His way." All the children of Zion are "taught of the Lord," and great is "their peace." (Isa. liv. 13.) He teaches as His people are able to bear. He instructs dull learners, and bears patiently with them that are wayward and slow of heart to believe. He inclines those whom He instructs to receive the lessons of heavenly wisdom, and leads them in the paths of uprightness. He is an unspeakably good Master. The whole course in providence in which He leads His

people is His disciplinary teaching. The word is His voice of authority and love. Holy ordinances are the appointed ways of intercourse with Him, as well as the means of saving instruction. Like Mary, as she met the risen Saviour at the sepulchre, we should welcome and embrace Him, exclaiming, "Rabboni—my good Master." Or seeing His excellency and beholding His glory, as the pious *Herbert*, we should delight in daily styling Him "my Master," when we engage in any part of His service, and are called by Him to any trial.

This blessed Master came on *an errand of love and mercy* from heaven. From all eternity He undertook for lost sinners, and became their Surety in the covenant. In the fulness of time, the First Begotten was brought into the world. He came to do the will of the father, and it was His "meat and drink" to finish His work. A main design of His coming was to "seek and to save the lost." He came from a great distance—from heaven, to a world lying under the curse, to serve a rebel race. He came to obey, and suffer and die. His grand errand to the earth was to advance the Divine glory, by redeeming lost sinners, and bringing many sons to glory. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. xx. 28.) The incarnation of the Eternal Word is an event of transcendent importance in the history of the universe. Occupying the highest place in the counsels of eternity, all movements in the history of the world before it took place were a designed preparation for it, and all future changes, till the end of time, will be influenced by it. Angels behold with wrapt wonder the coming in the flesh of the Saviour, and desire ever to look into the mystery of His sufferings and glory. We who have a far deeper interest in His manifestation in human nature than the principalities and powers in heaven, should ever rejoice in His advent. "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxviii. 26.) The fact of the incarnation, and

the design for which "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," supply the highest motive and encouragement to sinners who are called to come at His word and invitation.

In the word and ordinances of the Gospel, the Master comes for the salvation of sinners. The Son of Man is "lifted up," that "whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14.) In the proclamation of the Gospel to sinners He is set forth "evidently crucified among them." Displayed in His suitableness, beauty, and excellency, the Saviour is lifted up, as the moral magnet of the universe, to draw all men unto Him. (John xii. 32.) The ministers of the word are His ambassadors, not only sent by His authority to act in His name, but they are the fruit of His faithful promise. He comes with them, accompanying the word which they speak with saving power and efficacy. The ordinances of the Gospel are the institutions of the King and Head of the Church; and in them He comes, "meek, and having salvation." (Zech. ix. 9.) Every call of the word is the "voice of the Beloved," as He comes "skipping upon the mountains," "leaping upon the hills." (Song ii. 6.) Every Gospel invitation is His authentic offer of life and salvation. In the preaching of the word He stands at the door and knocks, assuring those who hear His voice and open to Him, of condescending intercourse with Him, and of gracious communion with Him. (Rev. iii. 20.) The dispensation of the Gospel is ever to be regarded as the Master coming and calling us. We should see that we "refuse not Him who speaketh." We should "take heed to the things spoken, lest at any time we should let them slip;" and, above all, it concerns us to come, as being personally called to His immediate presence, to believe and obey His invitation and command.

He comes, moreover, and calls us in *diversified providences*. All providences are under the direction and control of the enthroned Mediator. His voice speaks in

tender condescension in the daily displays of His goodness. The eyes of all creatures look to Him, the Giver of all good, and He seasonably supplies their wants. He gives us food and raiment, and fills our hearts with gladness. In trials, in sickness, bereavement, and distress, He comes, walking on troubled waters, and with re-assuring words He says to His people, "It is I; be not afraid." As He sent an angel to Paul in the hold of the tempest-tossed barque to assure him of his safety; as He called the blood-stained Manassoh to Himself in the prison-house; so does He often, in scenes of deepest trial and affliction, make His voice to be heard, and speaks to those whom He calls gracious deliverance. He is pleased to come to them in kindness—in scenes of difficulty and sorrow. Their afflictions are from the hand of One who loves them, and are His chastening rod to bring them to Himself. By means of them they are made "partakers of His holiness;" and however "grievous" they are for the present, they yield to them afterwards "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." All providences, bright and dark, prosperous and adverse, are even now, as administered by the Elder Brother, working together for the saints' good; and their issues, here and hereafter, are blessed. They are the unfolding of God's purposes of love towards the children of God, and the fulfilment of holy Scripture. The wheels that revolve around the church, and are controlled and directed by the Son of man enthroned above them, are "full of eyes"—instinct with supernatural intelligence, and they move right forward to effect the designs of infinite wisdom and grace. The Master who calls His people in special providences, proclaims His name *Jehorah-Jireh*, and declares that, in the mount of duty or trial, "the Lord shall be seen—the Lord shall provide."

At length the Master comes and calls His servants to His glorious presence to abide with Him for ever. At death the midnight cry is uttered—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." When, how, He may issue the

solemn summons, His servants are not permitted beforehand to know. It may be *sudden* and *unexpected*. "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." But if they have heard and known His voice at other times, and have obeyed the call that invites them to Him, His coming then will be joyful. His errand is for their deliverance and salvation. "I will come and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 3.) At times, as their preparation for this last coming of their exalted Master, His servants hear the sound of His footsteps; and, like the patriarch when he saw the waggons that were sent to carry him down to the presence of his long-lost son, their spirits revive. By the intimations of Providence and of the word—by the voice of conscience—and especially by the Spirit glorifying Christ, and becoming to them the seal and earnest of glory, they are led to anticipate with joy their absence from the body and their presence with the Lord. As He says once and again, "Behold, I come quickly," they joyfully welcome His appearance—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. xxv. 9.)

II. THE INVITATION CONSIDERED AS A PERSONAL, INDIVIDUAL CALL.

1. It is *universal*, and at the same time *particular*. It is adapted to all to whom the Gospel is spoken. The free, unhampered offer constitutes the obligation to obey, and is our warrant to believe. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man." (Prov. viii. 4.) "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come and buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isa. lv. 1.) The Master's call is addressed to sinners as such; to persons of all ages and conditions, to rebels and wanderers, to the

outcast and perishing. The invitation is urgent and most free, as the salvation offered is adapted to the sinner's need, and is most abundant. The thirsty, and those who have "no money"—without merit, and having no price in their hand—are invited to partake of the richest blessings. "Whosoever will" may come and "take of the water of life freely." The invitation is also *particular*. The Master "*calleth for thee*." Sinners, as such, the chief of sinners—the weak, the wandering, the backsliding, the lost—are invited to come. When some make excuse and refuse the gracious offer, with greater urgency the servants are sent to men by the highways and hedges—neglected and outcasts, to compel them to come in, that the house may be filled. Every one who hears the Gospel should regard himself as particularly called. The ambassadors of the King are sent to beseech sinners, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. The Saviour Himself, speaking in the Gospel, expostulates and pleads with men individually. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ez. xxxiii. 11.) "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt. xxiii. 37.)

The Master calls to *believe on Him*; and, forsaking sin and all else, to *cleave to Him with purpose of heart*. He invites sinners: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) He welcomes them to come to Him as they are, and assures them of a gracious reception. "Him that cometh, He will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) He promises them *rest*. With all earnestness He presses the invitation of His grace. "Opon to me, my sister, my spouse." (Song v. 2.) "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shevir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." (Song iv. 8.) "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." (Song ii. 10.) This is the

call to embrace Him, trust in Him, and rely upon Him alone for salvation. He expostulates with those who stay or refuse the invitation—"Why will ye die?" while He guarantees all blessing to those who comply with it—"Turn you at My reproof: behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you." (Prov. i. 23.) This call, while it urges to receive and embrace Christ, implies *holy separation and voluntary rejection* of all that would usurp His place in the heart, or would hinder entire dedication to Him. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." (Matt. xvi. 24.) "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." (Luke xiv. 23.) The invitation of the Bridegroom demands the entire separation and sole affection of those whom He calls to Himself. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." (Ps. xlv. 10.) The heart that is yielded to Christ brooks no rival, and He accepts no divided affection. The language of those who comply with the Master's call is, "What have I to do any more with idols?" "One shall say, I am the Lord's:" for Jehovah I am; to Jehovah I belong—(Isa. xlv. 3), and to no one else.

This call is to the Master's *service*. It intimates that He has need of you. He comes to His servants to send them into His vineyard, calling some at the first, the sixth, and the eleventh hour. Those who are called by Him are invited to take His yoke upon them. He sends them forth individually with the command, "Go, my son, work this day in my vineyard." If we receive aright His call, we enter in His school, and submit to be taught by Him. If we have yielded ourselves to the Lord, we have submitted to His authority, and have said—"All the commandments of my God I purpose to obey." We regard Him as the best of Masters, and consider it most honour-

able to do Him service. As we await His call, we say, with ready consent, "Here am I, send me;" "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And, delighting in the relation to Him, and in the work to which He calls us, we joyfully declare—"O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds." (Ps. cxvi. 16.)

The Master calls His servants to *receive all the support, consolation, and deliverance which they need from Himself*. To Martha and Mary, suffering under a recent heavy trial. He came to administer comfort. There is strong "consolation in Christ"—(Phil. ii. 1), and He is ever ready to impart it. To His people, in trial and sorrow. He says, "I will not leave you comfortless;" or, as in the original, "orphanised;" "I will come unto you." (John xiv. 18.) When the world is rejoicing, and they weep and lament, He promises, "I will come and see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John xvi. 22.) He is our Strength and our all-sufficient help. He supports by "the saving power of His right hand." He is with His people when they pass through the fire and the water. He bears them up when they are burdened and ready to be overcome. His promise is accompanied with the promise of needed and seasonable support. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Ps. lv. 22.) In the day of great trouble they are encouraged to cry to Him, and are assured of support and safety from Him. "Our fathers trusted in Thee: they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded." (Ps. xxii. 4, 5.) The support which the Master gives is sure and sufficient in weakness and trial; the deliverance wrought is great; and the joy that succeeds the night of weeping is full and everlasting.

Finally—He calls to *be near Him now and to be with Him for ever*. He invites His people to intimate fellowship with

Himself. When on earth, after He had preached to the multitudes that gathered to hear Him, He frequently called His chosen disciples to familiar and confidential intercourse with Him in private. "He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." (Mark vi. 31.) He welcomes His saints to the presence-chamber, where they may unbosom to Him their wants, and doubts, and sorrows; where He makes known to them "the secret of the Lord," and guarantees to them discoveries of grace and glory. Where He is, He has promised His servants shall be. (John xii. 26.) In a little while He will call those who are admitted to communion with Him on earth, to the higher fellowship in glory. The voice from the throne will speak to their hearts, as "the door is opened in heaven"—"Come up hither." (Rev. iv. 2.) He will address them in accents of love and unspeakable tenderness: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." (Song ii. 10.) This is His call to servants who have faithfully occupied the talents entrusted to them, to enter their Master's joy. Not only does He speak it to the heart, fulfilling their largest expectations; but He comes Himself to finish His own work in them, and to bring them home to mansions of bliss. "I will come and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 3.) As they hear His voice calling, "Behold I come quickly," and are told of the happiness that awaits them in their Master's presence, they go forth to meet and welcome Him—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

As Martha called her sister to come to Christ, so should we be the messengers of His invitation to each other. Like her, having ourselves found the Lord, we should speak His call to others in secret. True experience, instead of crying aloud, or making its voice to be heard in the streets, often delights in speaking to another quietly and in whispers. We should call others to Christ, as with a sister's loving, earnest voice. We should single out

persons to tell them of the Saviour, and to draw them to acquaintance with Him. Thus should we often "speak one to another;" and in diversified cases of labour, and want, and trial, we should aim to be heralds of the Saviour's mercy and love, and interpreters of His call to the sorrowful and the bereaved. From our own experience of His tender sympathy and readiness to help, we should commend Him to the weak and afflicted. We should convey the tidings of His gracious visits, like Martha, from the presence of death and the house of mourning. And when we go forth at His call to meet Him, like Mary, we should accompany Him to the sepulchre, to find the solace for all our griefs; to see His glory as the Conqueror of death; and as even at present the resurrection and the life to them that believe in His name.

III.—HOW THE CALL TO THE MASTER IS TO BE RECEIVED AND OBEYED.

The conduct of the retired, thoughtful Mary on the solemn occasion, is suggestive of much important practical instruction. Like her, when called, *we should go forth and welcome the Saviour coming*. "As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto Him." From her sister's report, she had the fullest warrant to go to Jesus. She went without delay. She took no formal leave of sympathizing friends who met with her. For the time, she lost sight of Lazarus, and forgot her own grief. One thought and desire filled the mind, that the presence of the Saviour whom she loved would relieve all her distress, and minister to her strong consolation. Thus should we hasten to the Master calling us. We should go forth to behold Him. We should run to meet Him as He comes to bless and save us. At whatever time, and in whatever way He comes, we should greet Him with hosannas in the highest. In prayer and praise we should welcome Him. "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." "O come for

our salvation: stir up Thy strength and might." Even when called to a hard service, or to severe trials, if we go forth to meet Him, and yield ourselves up to Him unreservedly, we shall find all seasonable help in Him. We shall know His yoke to be easy and His burden light.

It deeply concerns us to *hear* and *lay to heart* the Master's call. The general invitation of the Gospel addressed to perishing sinners, offering to them life and salvation, is wonderful, whether we consider the Divine Speaker, or the persons to whom it is spoken. The particular call brought to the heart by the Spirit produces gracious, powerful effects. It makes heard the all-penetrating voice of the Beloved. The word becomes quick and powerful. "Faith cometh by hearing." The spiritually dead "hear His voice, and they that hear live." We should ask the Spirit, when the Gospel message is addressed to us, that we may hear it aright, and that we may experience the quickening and sanctifying power of the word. Our warrant and welcome to receive Christ, and with Him all salvation-blessings, are contained in the Master's call. We are certainly included among those who are bid welcome to come and take the water of life freely. When He stands at the door and knocks, any who hear His voice and open the door are assured that they will sup with Him, and He with them. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; he that heareth should invite others to come; and whosoever will is welcome to come and take the plentiful water of life freely. (Rev. xxii. 17.) Are you called? This you may certainly know, for your state and character are declared in the terms of the invitation; and the Spirit renders effectual the word, and brings it with power to the heart.

This call, however spoken, is *to come to Christ Himself*. It is a "*holy vocation*," as it is from sin to holiness, and a *high calling* from earth to heaven. We are called to "the fellowship" of the Son of God, and of the saints. The Master calls to spiritual instruction, and to all the privileges of His disciples; to His honourable work and service here,

and to glory, honour, and immortality in heaven. He commands us, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." As we hear His voice, and comply with His invitation, we begin to have our country and citizenship in heaven. And when He comes at length to call home to His *rest in glory*, with enraptured joy we hail the invitation, and go out to meet Him, and to share His blessedness for ever.

We should seek to have *our interest in the Saviour's call made sure to ourselves*. We are enjoined to "give all diligence to *ascertain*" our "calling and election." (2 Pet. i. 10.) We know our vocation by the faith which readily embraces it, and by practical obedience. Thus, too, are we assured of our election from eternity, and of our final salvation. If these things be in us and abound, "we shall never fail;" and at last "an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (Ver. 10, 11.) Our grand duty is to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." (Eph. iv. 1.) Our calling becomes clearer to us as we discern in ourselves the marks of regeneration. We learn to do the works and manifest the Spirit of called ones. Christ is precious to us. We love the brethren with a pure heart fervently. Prayer becomes our element. Led by the Spirit of God, we manifest that we are the children of God. We have "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 14, 15.) We hear the Master's voice calling us to duty, and privilege, and trial; and we learn, with ready obedience, to go wherever He calls. "Lord! what wilt Thou have me to do? Here am I, send me."

It mainly concerns us to prepare for the *Master's final glorious appearance*. The Saviour, when going away, said to His disciples, "A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me." "And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from

you." (John xvi. 19-22.) In a short time, and often in an hour unexpected, the heavenly Bridegroom comes, and His people are called to go out to meet Him. He is making all ready now for His coming. Shortly, He will return from the wedding. His people should be in the attitude of men that wait for the Lord, that when He comes and knocks, "they may open unto Him immediately." (Luke xii. 36.) We should habitually watch, wait, and look for His appearance. With loins girded, and lamps trimmed, and all holy graces in exercise, we should seek actual preparation, as we hasten to the coming of the day of the Lord. We are required to give diligence to be "found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." Our right attitude and frame of spirit for the Saviour's certain and glorious appearance is waiting for His salvation, in steadfast faith, earnest expectation, and joyful hope of the crown of salvation. As we hear His voice calling us to His rest and glory, we should cherish the desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. When He comes to receive us at last to Himself, how joyfully should we exclaim, "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!" (Luke ii. 30.) At eventide, or at midnight, or in the morning watch, the Master comes to call His servants into His presence, to receive their blissful reward. By diversified ways—in youth, in vigour of life, and in old age; by lingering disease, or in a sudden and unexpected manner, they are called away from earthly labours and trials, to "the rest that remains for the people of God" in heaven. Be it ours at all times to hear and lay to heart this call, and to make serious daily preparation for our Master's final coming: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, will find so doing."

"Servant of God! well done.

Rest from thy loved employ:

The battle's fought, the victory's won—

Enter thy Master's joy.

" At midnight came the cry,
 'To meet thy God prepare ;
 He woke and caught his Captain's eye,
 Then strong in faith and prayer,

" His spirit with a bound
 Left its encumbering clay ;
 His tent at sunrise on the ground
 A darkened vision lay.

" The pains of death are passed,
 Labour and sorrow cease ;
 And life's long warfare closed at last,
 His soul is found in peace.

" Soldier of Christ ! well done,
 Praise be thy new employ ;
 And while eternal ages run,
 Rest in thy Saviour's joy."

IN CONCLUSION.

Consider the *dignity and excellency of the Master*, and seek to *know and delight in Him* as yours. He is the great Prophet of the new covenant. He reveals the whole will of God ; He teaches all that pertains to God's glory and human salvation. All authority and power are committed to Him, that He may give eternal life to as many as God has given Him. We should hearken to His voice, submit to His teaching, and consent to His sovereign rule. " It shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him." (Deut. xviii. 19.) He is worthy to be taken as the loved and only Master—unspeakably the greatest and best. We should sit at His feet, clothed with His righteousness, and learn of Him continually. Beholding and admiring His glory, we should account it our highest honour to be His servants, and to do His work on earth.

Our great duty is to hear Him calling, and to *recognise His coming to us*. In the word of the Gospel He utters

His condescending voice; in all ordinances He proposes to meet with His people to bless them; in diversified providences He discloses His purposes of wisdom and love; and comes at once to try and bless them. He bows the heavens, and comes down where they are, in scenes of labour or suffering—in wondrous condescension and love. He cares for them with tender and unremitting concern. He knows His sheep; where to find them, as He gathers them to Himself, supplies all their wants, and brings them to His pasture and fold. At the door of His people's hearts He stands and knocks. He is there on an errand of salvation. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name." (Isa. lxx. 1.) The way of privilege and blessing is ever to see the Master coming in diversified errands of mercy to them, and to cherish the fervent desire for His coming.

Finally—We should lay to heart *the Saviour's diversified calls, and ever yield to them a ready compliance*. Whether the word in the hand of the Spirit directly speaks to us; or others, coming from the Master's presence, call us to Him, our first duty is to hear, believe, and obey. When commanded to be reconciled to God, we should come to the blood of atonement for pardon and peace. Called to take upon us His yoke, and engage in His service, our duty is to forsake other masters, and to yield to Him the homage of the whole heart and life. Going to Him, we find all gracious support and comfort. Communion with the Redeemer is realised in holy ordinances; and this is itself true happiness and the earnest of heavenly felicity. Can you stay or refuse His call, and expect the blessings of salvation, which He alone can bestow, and which are only received by coming to Him? Would you desire to hear His voice distinctly and particularly calling you at death? Then you must hear and know it now, desire and delight in His presence, and walk with Him in all holy obedience. If it has frequently been joy to your heart to hear the Master's call; and you have gladly gone to the appointed

place of meeting; or to do or suffer His will, then with ecstatic joy will you hear Him calling you to rest with Him in glory. Thus will He present you "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy;" and throughout eternity you will praise Him that He called for you, and that by His grace you were inclined and enabled to forsake all and follow Him. The saints that are gathered together to Him, when He calls to the heavens and the earth, and who make a covenant with Him by sacrifice, will exult in His completed salvation. "Then the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge Himself." (Ps. l. 6.)

HONOUR TO CHRIST BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE TO SINNERS.

REVELATION i. 5, 6—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

This comprehensive text is the conclusion of the benediction which the venerable exile of Patmos earnestly invokes upon the seven Asiatic churches, and which, through them, is sought for all the churches of Christ throughout the world till the end of time. John prefixes His name, as the sole surviving representative of the Apostles, and an eye-witness of the life and death of the Saviour. Fervently does he supplicate for them *grace*—Divine favour through the merits of Christ, and *peace*, reconciliation to God, safety, and blessedness, as its joyful result. These two, which are the sum of all the good that can be enjoyed in time and throughout eternity, are sought from each of the Persons of the glorious Godhead. They are asked from the Father, "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come"—Jehovah, self-existent, eternal, and unchangeable. He, the One true and living God, the Head in the economy of human redemption, is spoken of in the absolute style of Deity, while the other two Persons are mentioned with reference to their assumed characters and offices. From Him, as the blessed Fountain and Source, flow all blessings to sinful men, through the mediation of the Son and by the agency of the Spirit.

Grace and peace prayed for are likewise sought from the "Seven spirits which are before the throne;" the Holy Spirit, who is the great Agent in applying redemption. *Seven*, the number of perfection, having a designed reference

to all the churches, indicates the abundance, variety, and sufficiency of the gifts, graces, and manifold operations of the Spirit. Then the same blessings are sought from the Saviour. With greater fulness is He spoken of in reference to His office and work as Mediator. He is presented in the glory of what He is, and of what He will do for His people. He is the "Faithful Witness" of the covenant, bearing testimony concerning Himself, and to God's wisdom and love in the scheme of human redemption. In this character He taught the truth, and confirmed it by miracles and sufferings. He fulfils all Divine promises and threatenings, and testifies concerning the judgment to come, and the eternal state. As the "First-begotten of the dead," He rose to die no more, and has become "the first-fruits of them that slept,"—the Source, Pledge, and Model of His people's resurrection in glory. As Mediator, He is "the Prince of the kings of the earth." The august title indicates His universal supremacy, and His absolute uncontrolled authority and dominion even over them that disown Him and rebel against Him. "Upon His vesture and thigh He has inscribed the name, King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Chap. xix. 16.) By Him earthly princes reign; to Him they are accountable. His glory they are bound to promote in all their official acts, as they are warned that they shall perish if they neglect and oppose Him. Then, as if overcome by the view of the Saviour's transcendent majesty and excellency, the Apostle is irresistibly drawn to worship Him, and to seek that glory and power in heaven and earth should be willingly and universally accorded to Him. In wrapt wonder and adoration he exclaims, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, &c., to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." This act of heart-felt homage is offered in the name of all the redeemed of the Lord, and should find a ready response in the hearts of assembled worshippers. This ascription of devout praise and prayer implies that

spiritual discoveries have been made to the soul of the Redeemer's infinite love; that we have received blessings of unspeakable value from His hand; and that, deeply sensible of this, we seek, in return, that all glory and dominion throughout the vast universe may redound to this exalted Saviour for ever and ever. May the blessed Spirit now come and reveal to us "the things that are Christ's!" May He lead us to personal acquaintance with the unspeakable love of Christ, and the efficacy of His blood, so that we may, with grateful hearts, ascribe to Him all praise, dominion, and glory! Let us consider—

I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO HIS PEOPLE, AND ITS EFFECTS.

It may not be questioned that the direct reference in the text is to the Lord Jesus, whose offices and character were before declared. A glory and excellency are seen in Christ that endear Him to His people above His being the First-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. This is set forth when the ascription of praise and homage is made—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." This is the grateful, joyful utterance of the heart in which has been shed abroad the love of Christ. His love for His people is so strong and distinctive that nothing more is required to set forth His whole character than to speak of Him as the One "who loved us." It is confessedly difficult to portray the Saviour's glory here. The heart will feel what the tongue is unable fully to express. Ever thus will the redeemed celebrate His praise; but it will be with the heartfelt conviction that their words are inadequate to declare His transcendent excellency, and what they owe Him.

1. He loved them with a *sovereign, distinguishing love from eternity*. The objects loved were regarded as fallen, guilty, lost sinners; yet, when angels, who were more excellent by nature, were passed by, and left under wrath.

He set His love upon them. When He was in the bosom of the Father, in the bliss of eternity, He "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth," and "His delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.) The idea of man's salvation—the purpose and plan of the covenant of grace—could only spring from infinite free love. The Son of God voluntarily became man's Surety, and engaged His heart to suffer and die through gratuitous, sovereign love to lost sinners. This has been justly styled "the bosom-grace, whence all other benefits and graces flow." The covenant of peace, comparable to king Solomon's "chariot of the wood of Lebanon," has its midst "lined with love for the daughters of Jerusalem." (Song iii. 11.) Towards weak, helpless, defiled human beings, the sovereign and unchangeable love of God in covenant is drawn forth and exhibited, so that it is always nearest to them, that they may rest and recline upon it for all support and consolation in life and death. The first and leading note of praise of ransomed sinners will ever be the love of the Father and the Son in the covenant.

2. This love is *unspeakably great and everlasting*. Whether its author or its objects are considered, the greatness of the Saviour's love towards lost sinners appears beyond all conception or expression. Sinners under the curse—guilty, depraved, and rebellious—were so loved that the only-begotten Son of God was given to suffer and die that they might be saved. Created intellect can never grasp the infinite dimensions of this love. Its *breadth* is world-wide, embracing men of every country, race, and character; its *length* extends through all ages; its *height* reaches to the throne of the Eternal; and its *depth* is seen in the unfathomable resources of God's heart, and in the low condition from which it raises its objects. What but such a love could rest on creatures so unlovely and utterly vile, or effect for them what was required for their eternal salvation? What else could have elected, pardoned, purified, and redeemed the church? The love of Christ in

human redemption is love to *sinnera*. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." With sin infinitely hated and abominable in His sight, He yet so loved them as to give His life for their ransom. Here all Divine attributes are in the highest degree illustrated and glorified. The love of Christ for the guilty and lost, which was eternal and gratuitous in its origin, is unchangeable and everlasting. It overlooks in its objects all unworthiness, and removes every obstacle to its outflow and exercise. He loves the saved to the end of life, and after death to all eternity. He "rests in His love" toward them—(Zeph. iii. 17), as all His dealings towards them throughout the whole of their existence are like streams issuing from an infinite and inexhaustible fountain, and as waters that flow toward a shoreless and unfathomable ocean. The love wherewith the Saviour loves us had no beginning, can have no boundary, and through eternal ages will know no change or termination.

3. The love of Christ is seen in *His incarnation-work on earth and atoning death*. He "loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Actuated by the love that dwelt in His heart from eternity, in "the fulness of time" He came down from heaven. He assumed our humanity, that He might suffer and die. He became one of us that He might bear our sins, experimentally know our wants and trials, and sympathise with our afflictions and sorrows. His whole spirit while on earth, and all that He did or suffered, was the expression of Christ's great love to His people. His was Divine love, with the tenderest human affection. It was the love of Immanuel, infinitely great and unchangeable, and, at the same time, that of a brother, full of compassionate kindness. His intercourse with His chosen disciples, and His footsteps on earth as He walked among the poor, and helpless, and bereaved, left everywhere the impress of tender, melting affection. His death of ignominy and embittered suffering, in the room of rebels and enemies, was the noon-tide display of the

Saviour's love. This led Him to the cross, and constrained Him to give His soul an offering for sin. In the death of Christ we behold a transcendent manifestation of His bleeding, dying, conquering love. God "*commended*"—set forth in the highest, most attractive manner—"His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) If the strength of human affection is estimated by the sacrifices which are willingly made for its objects, then the greatness of the love of Christ for those whom He came to redeem, as seen in His atoning death, must ever surpass all expression and conception.

4. The love of Christ toward His saints, while it is displayed in all His past dealings with them, is *present and perpetual*. He pities them when lost and under the curse. When wandering, He goes after them, and seeks them till He finds them. He draws them "with cords of love, and bands of a man." The day of their quickening and conversion is their "time of love." With yearning sympathy He spreads the skirt of His garment over their nakedness—enters into covenant with them, and they become His. He adopts them into His family, and they become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. For them He provides all spiritual blessings, and confers them upon them in loving kindness and tender mercy. They are sanctified by the blood of Christ, "with the washing of water by the word;" and, as they become holy, they are given to know the condescending "love of the Spirit," in His indwelling, and in all His gracious operations as the Sanctifier, Teacher, and Comforter, and as the seal and earnest of the heavenly inheritance. Afflictions to the saints are the medicine and discipline of the new covenant. They are love-tokens from the Saviour's hands. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." (Heb. xii. 6.) "In love to my soul Thou hast delivered it from the pit of corruption." (Isa. xxxviii. 17.) What is said of the tried love of the saints to Christ is only true in the highest sense of His great and un-

changeable love towards them. It is "strong as death: the coals thereof are coals of fire which have a most vehement flame." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." (Song viii. 6, 7.)

The ascription of the text refers to the exercise of Christ's love as *constant* and *perpetual*. The verb in the original is in the present tense—"Unto Him *who loveth us*." He loves now, as He did from eternity, and in all time past, and as He will to the end. He will ever "rest in His love" to His people. "Neither death, nor life, nor powers of whatever kind, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39.)

The love of Christ is seen in its *blessed effects*. These are briefly but comprehensively declared when it is said, He "*washed us from our sins in His own blood*." This most emphatic statement sets off and amazingly enhances the love of Christ towards guilty and polluted sinners. The love which led to such a sacrifice, and that produces such effects, could not possibly be found in any creature. The greatness of the Saviour's love is often exhibited in this aspect: "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 2, 25, 26.)

This washing from sin in Christ's blood implies, First, That His blood was shed as *an atoning sacrifice*. Vicarious suffering is the central idea of sacrifice. The sin of the offerer is regarded as transferred to the substitutionary victim; and hence it is accounted guilty and punished as such. The Saviour died not merely nor chiefly as an example, but in our room and stead, the Just for the un-

just, that He might bring us to God." "The Lord caused to meet upon Him * the iniquity of us all." "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (Isa. liii. 6; 1 Pet. iii. 21; 2 Cor. v. 21.) The embodied love of God, displayed in the Redeemer's sufferings, went in under the dismal cloud of wrath that overhung the guilty, that it might rescue them from impending destruction. For them He fully paid the ransom-price. He satisfied Divine justice, quenched the flames of Divine wrath, and put away sin for ever by the sacrifice of Himself." The love manifested in the shedding of His blood exhibits Him in the most attractive aspects as our full Ransom, our all-sufficient Propitiation, our mighty and ever-living Redeemer.

2. The blood of Christ is savingly applied by the Spirit—to *pardon and sanctify wholly*. As we come to Mount Zion, we come to the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the "blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel." (Heb. xii. 24.) When the Spirit applies the blood of atonement, the righteousness of Christ is imputed, guilt is cancelled, and sin, in its demerit and penal consequences, is for ever put away. There is "no condemnation," nor ever will be, for them that are in Christ Jesus. The pardon obtained through His blood is full, free, and everlasting. In the death of the Redeemer avenging justice has obtained all its due, and, in consequence, the guilty go free. Sin, as to its guilt, is completely cancelled, so that it can never rise again in the judgment. "He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah vii. 19.) We are washed from our sins in *sanctification*. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Spiritual cleansing is here put first, be-

* This is the rendering of Bishop Louth.

cause this is the grand evidence of justification. The blood of Jesus is a "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," over full, accessible, and inexhaustible. This is the ground of *forgiveness*, which is an act *without* us, and the chief means of sanctification; a work *within* us, which progresses till all defilement is purged away, and we are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. The word, as it presents Christ's blood, has a sanctifying influence (John xvii. 17), and the Spirit's office is ever to apply Christ's blood for the removal of moral pollution, and for assimilating the moral nature to the Divine image and likeness. Thus believers are cleansed in heart and life; and their robes, made white in the blood of the Lamb, shine resplendent in the beauty of holiness.

3. The love of Christ is seen in the washing of sinners in His *own* blood; and it provides that their sanctification will certainly be complete. It is said "He *hath washed* us;" or, as some ancient manuscripts and versions render it, "He *hath loved* us from our sins in His own blood." From the stain and filthiness of sin it is only Christ's blood that can efficaciously cleanse us. The blood of bulls and goats can never put away sin; the death of martyrs can in no sense expiate sin, or cleanse from moral defilement. Christ Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. xiii. 12.) In order that the blood should be properly His own, He must be a Divine person. He purchased the church "with His own blood." (Acts xx. 28.) With a medium of cleansing so precious, and of such sovereign efficacy, there is the fullest provision made for the complete purification of those whom Christ loved and died to save. Having "loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." The washing in His blood, which is begun in regeneration, will go forward till every spot of moral pollution disappears, and the redeemed are made perfect in holiness in their admission to glory.

II. THE POSITION AND CHARACTER OF THE SAVED.

The love of Christ, seen in His blood shed and applied, not only takes away all that is sinful in us, but confers at the same time the highest dignity and most honourable privileges. "He hath made us kings and priests unto God and our Father." Elsewhere in the new song the redeemed declare of the Lamb. "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. v. 10.) The saints, exalted to dignity and honour, are "a royal priesthood," (1 Pet. ii. 9); or, as the expression is literally, "a kingdom, even priests," or "a kingdom of priests." To God's ancient people it was said, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exod. xix. 6.) So all believers now have this high dignity, and are called to these distinguished offices. Christ Jesus is a King-Priest, after the order of Melchizedec. The saints share with Him his sacerdotal consecration and royal dominion, and shall hereafter sit with Him upon His throne. They are kings because they are priests—kings in relation to man and to all worldly things, and priests in relation *to God*; in this character they stand before Him to minister, and they have near access to the King.

As "kings," or a "kingdom to God and His Father," they are—Exalted to *lofty dignity*, have *power over enemies*, and *reign with Christ*. Raised from the dunghill, they are made to sit among princes. Numbered with the First-born, they are made "Higher than the kings of the earth." The kingdom of God, which is *within them*, is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." They have authority and power from and with Christ, even now while in work, and conflict, and trial. They "reign on the earth." By faith they "subdue kingdoms," they trample on the young lion and the dragon, and have "the victory which overcomes the world." There is imparted to them a free, noble spirit. A royal stamp is impressed upon them. Each one of them resembles a king.

Their "Father's name is written on their foreheads." They are made "conquerors, and more than conquerors," even when engaged in the warfare—when assailed with fears, and beset with powerful enemies. They reign with Christ here, as they have a part in His mediatorial dominion, and they exercise an influence in God's government of nations and churches. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in pieces: even as I received of my Father." (Rev. ii. 26, 27.) The saints shall reign hereafter with Christ in glory. "Upright men shall have dominion in the morning." As Christ has overcome, and is set down with His Father on His throne, so the saint overcoming shall sit down with Him on His throne, and shall reign with Him for ever and ever.

Chiefly as *priests* do the saints thus share with the Redeemer His royal dignity and dominion. Their priesthood is the continuous ground of their kingship. They are *priests* as they are *separated and consecrated to God*. As the sons of Aaron, separated from others, were set apart to their sacerdotal functions by sacred rites—by water and blood, and the holy oil, they were consecrated; so those whom Christ loves, and calls to the Christian priesthood, are consecrated by the water of regeneration, the blood of atonement, and the unction of the Spirit. Separated to be holy, the vow of consecration is upon them, and they should ever regard themselves as not their own, but as called to be wholly the Lord's.

They are, moreover, engaged in *priestly service*. By this office there is provided a medium of communion between God and the sinner. Priests approach near to God, and stand at His altar. They offer to Him spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, and sacred vows. They "*continue instant in prayer*." The original term is applied frequently to a priestly service. In acts of devout worship,

in works of Christian benevolence, and especially in "yielding themselves to God," and giving their bodies "a living sacrifice," they manifest their dedication to God. The consecration of worldly substance for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the relief of the poor, is "an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, acceptable to God;" and when sinners are awakened and converted, "the offering up of the Gentiles" is a sacrifice well-pleasing in His sight. All Christian work, performed in the spirit of true self-dedication, is the service of a consecrated priesthood, and is a "savour of rest" to God.

These *priests of God* are themselves *holy men*. The priests of Aaron's house were required to be "holy to the Lord their God." All the ordinances of the ancient priesthood forcibly impressed this upon its ministers. The priestly robes were to be fine linen, and were designated "holy garments." Their flesh was to be washed in pure water, when they went in to minister before the Lord. They were to be without blemish, and perfect in person; and it was indispensable to all their service that they should be free from criminal defilement. Fragrant incense was to be intermingled with all their offerings, and the precious perfume of costly spices was to be upon their persons. All these typical provisions have found their amplest fulfilment in the priesthood of Christ. He "gave Himself for an offering and a sacrifice to God." He stands at the "golden altar" and "offers up much incense with the prayers of all saints." Our offerings, whether of ourselves or of our service, are holy and acceptable alone through Him. The altar of His atonement sanctifies the gift. In Him God sees no iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel.

This service of the king-priests is eminently to God *through the Mediator*. We are made by Christ a kingdom of priests to "His God and Father."* Our dedication and service are to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

* This is the original expression.

They are presented to Him as the Head of the new covenant—the Source and last end of the wondrous scheme of human salvation. We come to Him through Christ. “Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph. ii. 18.) To those who are kings and priests Jehovah is revealed in all paternal relations. The work which they perform is presented as that of a son serving a father; and they enjoy continually an interest in the Father’s love and pity and compassion. Believers share with Christ a new covenant-relation to God the Father, as its blessed Head. When He went away to glory, He said, “I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” (John xx. 17.) And now, while engaged perpetually in the work of His own royal priesthood in glory, He leads His people to the loving, honourable service of their Father in heaven, and secures to them the privilege of paternal approval and acceptance. This presents in the clearest light the wondrous provision of the new covenant. Both the high contracting parties are exhibited as concerned in the character and work of the redeemed. Loved by the Son with an overlasting and unchangeable love, and washed from their sins in His blood, they are exalted to sacerdotal and royal dignity; and in their consecration and service they have nearness and access to God their Father, and become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

III. THE HONOUR AND DIGNITY ASCRIBED TO THE SAVIOUR.

Those who are loved by Christ and washed from their sins in His blood, with united hearts, and with the whole heart declare, “To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Receiving all *from* Him, they willingly ascribe all *to* Him. The doxologies of Scripture, which are full of meaning—the language at once of fervent desire and of loftiest praise combined—occupy the prominent place in the worship of the saints in heaven, as prayer does in that

of the church on earth. This doxology is twofold, as in chap. iv. 9-11 we have one threefold, and in chap. v. 13 and in Jude 25, there is a fourfold ascription of "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb."

The "glory and dominion" given to the Saviour is *the glory of all Divine attributes and works*. He is, in the fullest sense, the Lord of hosts—the King of glory. He who "by Himself purged our sins," is the "brightness" of God's "glory, and the express image of His person."* (Heb. i. 3.) In Christ is the manifestation or resplendent shining forth of the glory of invisible Godhead. In Him is the glory of Divine power, wisdom, holiness, mercy, love, and truth. In His person all these perfections are combined and harmonised, as the separate rays of the sun form one pure, resplendent element, light. The "fulness of the Godhead bodily" dwells in Him, and by Him alone is it made known and revealed. (Col. ii. 9; John i. 18.) The glory of Jehovah's works, of whatever kind, is His. He is the Creator of heaven and earth—of the universe of mind as well as of matter: creation's *last end* as well as *first cause*. "All things were created by Him and for Him." (Col. i. 16.) The glory of *providence* belongs to Him as Mediator. "In the appearance of a man" He sits upon the throne above the wheels, controlling and guiding every movement. (Ezek. i. 26.) The "government is upon His shoulders." He "upholds all things by the word of His power," and by Him all things *subsist*."† (Col. i. 17.) The close of the providential system at the last judgment makes the fullest, brightest display of the Redeemer's glory. He shall then "appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He shall come in His own glory revealed, as His people's life manifested, and as the sovereign Judge

* The original may be better rendered—"The effulgence of His glory and the impress of His substantial essence."

† Gr.—"subsist"—as one integral harmonised system or whole.

of all, in the glory of His Father and of His mighty angels.

The whole glory of *human redemption* belongs to Him. He is the Saviour of sinners. His "glory is great in God's salvation." (Ps. xxi. 6.) "Honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon Him." The costly plan of salvation originated in His eternal wisdom and love, and in His Surety-undertaking. The glory of the execution pertains to Him when He paid the ransom-price, and became the propitiatory sacrifice for sin. He makes known and confers salvation in every part of it. The good work which He begins He gloriously completes. The crown of salvation His own hand bestows; and the praises of the redeemed attribute to Him the undivided glory of all that has been done to rescue them from wrath and bring them home to glory. Arrayed in "white robes"—the emblem of completed sanctification, and with palms of victory in their hands, they cry with a loud voice: "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 10.) All the glory which belongs to the church is *from Him and to Him*.

The church's *existence, government, preservation, and perpetuity* are the fruit of His love, and are secured by His universal Headship. The glory of Divine grace, truth, and holiness, in inexhaustible fulness, is in Christ, the church's living Head, and flows through Him to the church, "which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all." (Eph. i. 22.) The glory that illuminates the church, and that flows from her to enlighten the world, emanates from Christ, the Sun of righteousness. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." (Ps. l. 2.) The mystic woman is said to be "clothed with the sun," as the church is arrayed in the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer, and through union to Him is irradiated by the light that dwells in Him. "The moon" of Jewish types and of sublunary objects is "under her feet, and upon her head is a crown of twelve stars"—the doctrine of the

Apostles of the Lamb. (Rev. xii. 1.) The glory of the church's final establishment and triumph belongs alone to her exalted King. Putting down all opposing power, and assuming His great power to reign, He establishes Mount Zion on the top of the mountains, and above the hills. The nations of the saved flow into it, and the kings of the earth bring their riches and glory into it. The transcendent glory of the church in her Millennial and heavenly state is from Christ; and saints, gathered from all people, and made perfect in holiness and felicity, willingly accord it to Him. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, that descends out of heaven from God, as a bride adorned for her husband, has "the glory of God, and her light is like unto a stone most precious." (Rev. xxi. 10, 11.) "The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of it: and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. xxi. 22, 23.)

His are all *power* and *authority* in the fullest sense. The dominion ascribed to Christ includes all power, physical and moral.* He has the supreme right of dominion, and He possesses all strength and might for its proper exercise. His is moral ability, and He has universal and incontrollable authority. He is "Head over all principality and power." "All power in heaven and earth is given Him." "His kingdom ruleth over all." As Mediator, all things are put under His feet. He is, by the Father's appointment, and as the reward of His finished obedience, Lord of angels and men. He possesses sovereign dominion over men's hearts and over organised communities. He is Lord of the invisible world. Unto Him, and not to angels, "the world to come is put in subjection." "He has the keys of hell and of death." (Heb. ii. 5; Rev. i. 18.) It fills with holy joy the hearts of the saints, that Christ Jesus, their Elder Brother, has,

* The Greek term denotes strength—might.

by proper and exclusive right, this extensive dominion, and that He possesses all ability and power for its due administration. This is the burden of their loftiest praise—"Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Lastly—This ascription is the expression of assured hope that the Redeemer will hereafter obtain universal visible dominion on earth, and that His kingdom *shall last for ever*. Though we see not yet all things put under Him, yet there are the fullest guarantees that His dominion shall extend to the ends of the earth, and that His kingdom shall be perpetual. He shall "come, whose right it is, and it shall be given Him." He must reign, "till He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." (1 Cor. xv. 24.) To Him shall "every knee bow" in willing or constrained subjection, and "every tongue confess." "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 8.) When the last of the great world-powers shall have been brought down and removed, the kingdom of Messiah, the Prince, shall be established over its prostrate ruins. To the Son of man is "given dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. vii. 14.) When the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, then the visible kingdom of the Mediator shall fill the earth. This is its most glorious state, for the coming of which the fervent prayers of the saints in all ages have been ascending to the throne. This blessed consummation has ever been the subject of their highest and most joyful hopes. The dominion of the enthroned Mediator is, in the fullest sense, perpetual and everlasting. His kingdom lasts "through the ages of ages." It continues on the earth, till "the end comes," when it shall be delivered up. Then *its form of administration* will be changed; but He to whom is ascribed the dominion and

glory will be, throughout eternity, the Head of power and the glory of the Redeemed; and their happiness will consist in the "entrance" which shall be ministered to them abundantly *into the everlasting* kingdom of their Lord and Saviour. Such is the dominion which pertains of right to the Mediator—glorious in its nature, of universal extent, and everlasting duration—by which the punishment of the wicked, and the full felicity of the righteous, are secured, and a revenue of glory redounds to the Godhead for ever and ever. The only adequate return which those who know the love of Christ in choosing, calling, and saving them, is in heart, by fervent prayer, and by holy-sustained effort, to ascribe to Him the glory and dominion to which He alone is entitled, and which He will, without fail, possess, for ends the most salutary and important.

IN CONCLUSION.

1. This subject calls us to consider and *appropriate Christ's love and its precious fruits*. This is the fountain-spring of human redemption—the matter of ceaseless wonder and praise to saints and holy angels now and throughout eternity. The office of the Holy Spirit is to "shed abroad" this love in our hearts, (Eph. vi. 18, 19); and when He does this, it becomes the ruling principle of our lives—the actuating force in all our conduct. We "love Him because He first loved us." We are *constrained* by the love of Christ to live no longer to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. The contemplation of the Saviour's love toward sinners, guilty, rebellious, and lost, is fitted to engage our highest thoughts, and to fill the heart with wonder and gratitude. It leads to self-surrender, and is the grand principle of all holy obedience. The love which the Spirit sheds abroad in the heart is *supreme* and *exclusive*. As in the conjugal relation, the heart constrained by it brooks no rival, and is unconscious of a divided affection. If we have seen the love of Christ in choosing us, in His dying to save us, and have felt its power in our hearts,

we cannot but love Him supremely, and no service that He requires will be esteemed by us too arduous to render Him—no sacrifice too great for His name's sake.

2. Our washing from our sins in Christ's blood *assures us of pardon and cleansing*, and supplies the *strongest motive and encouragement for the cultivation of holiness*. This precious blood was the infinite price of our ransom. It cancels all our guilt and seals our pardon. It is the great Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness—ever accessible and inexhaustible. By this blood, applied by the Spirit, our sins are blotted out as a cloud, and our transgressions as a "thick cloud;" and through its continual application we are cleansed from all iniquity, and enabled to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. The ransomed, brought home to heaven, have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) This blessed provision of the Saviour's love we should constantly appropriate. As the ancient Levitical priesthood were required to wash their bodies, and to sprinkle clean water on the sacrifices, so should we seek the purification of our persons, and of all our services, through the great sacrifice which ancient victims prefigured. What a full and blessed provision has been made through the atoning death of Christ for the perfect sanctification of all the redeemed! "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 25.) How great our privilege to have continual access to Christ's blood for cleansing! Ever should we have recourse to it, that we may in heart and life be purified, that we may shine in the beauty of holiness, and that at length we may be presented to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Eph. v. 27.)

3. Let us consider what *we owe to the Saviour*, so precious in His love, so condescending and *munificent in the fruits* which He has conferred upon us. It behoves us to beware in any measure of slighting, refusing, or neglect-

ing Him. We should fully embrace Him now, and yield ourselves wholly to Him. The only adequate return for the unspeakable love of Christ to us is to set our love supremely upon Him, and to be so devoted to His service as to be willing to live to promote His honour and glory. We should delight ourselves in Him. Accepting Him, and resting with complacency upon Him, the language of our hearts should ever be: "A bundle of myrrh is my Well-beloved unto me: He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." "We will be glad and rejoice in Him; we will remember Thy love more than wine: the upright love Thee." (Song i. 13, 14.) If washed in His blood, as we name His endeared name, we should depart from iniquity. We are called to be a "holy people to the Lord our God." Considering our eminent office and station, and the service required of us as a *kingdom of priests*, we should aim continually at entire consecration, and, as standing at God's altar, to cherish a royal spirit. Ours should ever be the resolution: "I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar." (Ps. xxvi. 6.) While we daily wash our robes to make them white in the blood of the Lamb, we are required to reflect "the beauty of holiness" here, as we hope at length to appear before the King in shining garments, and to walk with Him in white, as being worthy.

4. This subject presents to us the *highest inducement and the most affecting motives to commemorate the Saviour's death*. The ordinance of the Supper is the feast of the Saviour's love, as it displays the riches of His grace to sinful men, and is a means by which He communicates His love to His people, and through which they have loving fellowship with Him. It is a seal of the covenant of God's peace, by which they are assured of His favour and friendship, and have ratified to them its exceeding great and precious promises. Believers gathered to the sacramental feast are brought to "the banqueting house," and a "banner of love" is raised over them, and waves around them. The

King Himself sits with them at His table, and "the spikenard" of their graces, excited into vigorous exercise, gives forth its fragrance. Beholding and admiring His excellency, they "delight themselves greatly" in sitting down under His shadow, and "His fruit is sweet to their taste." His gracious presence is enjoyed, and in terms of condescending familiarity and endearment He welcomes them to the provision of His house. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song v. 1.) Our great duty and privilege, in coming to the communion, is to raise a monument of devoted affection to Him who loved us; to remember and confide in His love; and in gratitude to yield ourselves to Him wholly and for ever. The blood which is symbolised in the ordinance is the ordained way of spiritual cleansing; and by it we are consecrated as a "peculiar people" and a "spiritual priesthood" to the Lord. We thus are enabled to "ascend the hill of God" with clean hands and a pure heart; our service is at God's altar; the blood by which we are washed proclaims that "holiness alone becomes God's house for ever;" and ennobled by admission to the "palace of the King," and consecrated by renewed vows to His honourable service, we have to live and act as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." (1 Pet. ii. 9.)

Finally—The great work of our life, as loved by the Saviour from eternity, and cleansed and ennobled by the shedding application of His blood, is *to give Him all glory and dominion for ever*. This should be the subject of our constant and fervent prayers—the steadfast aim of our lives; and to accomplish it we should willingly devote all our resources and influence and our most strenuous efforts. To the exalted Redeemer we should ascribe the undivided glory of all our salvation; of all He has done for us in

providence, of every privilege conferred in His house, and of all that He has enabled us to do for His name's sake. He alone is worthy to have the supreme dominion over our hearts and lives. We are called to testify, pray, and labour, that His kingdom may be universally established in the earth, and that the benignant fruits of His peaceful and gracious dominion may be abundantly enjoyed. The cardinal article of our fathers' noble testimony was, "All glory and dominion to the reigning Mediator." To proclaim this everywhere they regarded as the grand mission of their lives. They "earnestly contended," and devotedly laboured, that the national glory and dominion should belong to Christ, and that He should be owned as the sole King and Head of the church. And when they were called to seal a noble testimony with their blood, the last utterances of fervent prayer and triumphant praise were the ascription of the highest honour and universal dominion to the "Prince of the kings of the earth." No object in time to live for is worthy to be compared to that of giving all glory to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and of labouring to bring all into willing subjection to His sovereign dominion. To gather jewels for His mediatorial crown is an honour surpassing all earthly dignity. In the victories of Christ's cause His servants are more than conquerors; and in His extending dominion they reign as kings with Him on earth. On the subversion of the antichristian power, "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Daniel vii. 27.)

The highest hopes of the saints, as they look forward to the second coming of Christ, and anticipate the bliss of eternity, are centred on the revealed glory and the everlasting kingdom of the Redeemer. As the innumerable multitude of the saved surround His throne, and every

crown is prostrate at His feet, and every palm is waving in His honour, the loud and ecstatic acclaim of their praise will for ever be: "UNTO HIM THAT LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER, BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."

THE REDEEMER'S CROWN FLOURISHING.

PSALM cxxxii. 18—"But upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

THIS psalm, of which the words of the text are the concluding expression, is full of the grace and glory of Zion's exalted King. It is a "Song of Degrees"—a pilgrim song—one of those which it is probable the thousands of Israel sang as they went up to the temple to keep the appointed solemn feasts. The psalm, whether penned by David or Solomon, and sung at the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion, or at the dedication of the temple, speaks throughout of One more illustrious than any earthly monarch, and of privileges and honours greater than the sceptres and thrones of the world can confer. The covenant of royalty with David was emblematical of that of redemption between the Father and the Son from all eternity. It was a manifestation and renewal to David and his seed of God's purpose of grace, and had a designed special reference to the Messiah promised—the Root and Offspring of David, and to the salvation which He was to accomplish. This covenant guarantees all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings to the chosen seed, in the way of holy obedience, the perpetual continuance of the church on earth, and the happiness of the redeemed for evermore.

"Jehovah hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation." All the privileges of the saints are the fruit of electing love. These are conferred and enjoyed in connection with the church of God—the place of His desired and perpetual abode. From this seat of His gracious presence and throne of His power, He assures His people of the enjoyment of the choicest and richest blessings.

These they partake of in providence and grace now, and they shall fully enjoy in glory hereafter. From the creatures the curse is taken away, and they are sanctified to their use. Their provision is "abundantly blessed," and the poor and hungry are satisfied with good things. Especially have the saints the promise and guarantee of the enjoyment of all spiritual and eternal blessings. These are given in answer to earnest believing prayer. What was importunately asked by the church (ver. 9)—"Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy"—is promised with enlarged blessing. *Righteousness* was asked as the title and beginning of the blessing. The Divine answer bears that Jehovah Himself will bestow complete and everlasting *salvation* upon ministers; and, as the happy consequence, the saints shall exult and shout aloud in holy rejoicing. The terms of the promise indicate a settled connection in the Divine method of conferring spiritual blessing on the church. When ministers are sanctified and adorned with salvation in their ministrations, then the people, converted, edified, and refreshed, have cause of *continuous* spiritual rejoicing.* The blessings bestowed on the church flow from the fulness of her exalted Head; and in the dignity and glory given Him there is provision made that they shall be largely communicated. The "horn of David," the symbol of power and plenty, which is made to bud, points to the vigorous, prevailing power and superabounding fulness of the Saviour who sits on David's throne. His is lasting honour and glorious light. The "lamp prepared for the Anointed" is the light that emanates from Himself in true and precious promises, and the Gospel light that is appointed to shine amidst the world's thick darkness, to lighten sinners to eternal day, and at length to fill the whole earth with His glory. The destruction of all enemies, and complete victory for the cause of truth, are secured through

* The Hebrew implies that "they shall continually shout for joy."

the Father's promise in the covenant, by His universal and powerful dominion. His enemies shall be clothed with shame as with a garment. Then, in the close, as if this were the top of the magnificent climax, it is announced, "Upon Himself shall His crown flourish." When these promises that go before are fully made out, and the power of numerous enemies is subdued and destroyed, then shall be seen the crown of the enthroned Mediator shining in resplendent lustre, and "His large and great dominion" advancing with youthful vigour, and diffusing everywhere its countless blessings. This declaration is the befitting close of an inspired song of lofty thanksgiving. It lifts up the mind and heart, and concentrates them upon the glorified Redeemer. It brings us in full view of the beauty and splendour of His royal dominion, and gives the fullest assurance that this day and hereafter, despite of all enemies and opposition, and amidst all changes and revolutions throughout the world, "Upon Himself shall His crown flourish." We shall notice—

I. THE CROWN OF THE EXALTED REDEEMER.

The term crown sometimes denotes a *garland* of victory achieved. It points at times to the *tiara* or *mitre* of the priesthood. In some of the ancient versions (as the Septuagint, the Vulgate, &c.) the words of the text are rendered—"My *sanctification* shall flourish!"—the reference being to the inscription on the golden plate in the high priest's mitre, when he presented himself within the veil. (Exod. xxviii. 36.) A crown is a chief part of the insignia of royalty; and its possessor is regarded as entitled to all that pertains to supreme dominion. While the dignity of the supreme and perpetual priesthood pertains to the Redeemer, the crown which is here said to flourish upon Him indicates His princely authority and dominion. In this character He administers the covenant of peace, and dispenses its manifold blessings. He blesses the provision of His church, and satisfies His poor with bread. He

clothes His ministers with salvation, and makes His people to rejoice in heart. His power is vigorous and all prevalent, and the light of His cause is continually spreading. As He sits on the throne and rules in Jacob, enemies are clothed with shame, and reduced to prostrate subjection. While all this is in progress, and as the final and blessed result, "Upon Himself shall His crown flourish."

This crown is, first of all, the *supreme dignity and authority which He possesses as a Person in the Godhead*. Throughout every part of Divine revelation Christ Jesus the Saviour is set forth as a royal Prince. The Creator of the universe is the Lord and proprietor of heaven and earth, and has sovereign and uncontrolled authority over all the creatures that He has called into existence. His is essential, universal, eternal dominion, in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit. "His kingdom ruleth over all." He is "the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see." (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.) The crown of eternal Godhead is His. "Of the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." (Heb. i. 8.)

It is especially His **MEDIATORIAL POWER AND GLORY**. The Mediator was set up from everlasting; and as ruler in Israel, "His goings forth were from of old, from eternity." (Micah v. 2.) "All power in heaven and earth" is said to be "given" Him. "All things are delivered Him of the Father;" and there is "given Him a name which is above every name." (John xvii. 2; Matt. xi. 27; Phil. ii. 9.) As one of the Persons of the Trinity, He possesses absolute authority, which can neither be increased nor diminished. But this universal dominion is given Him for mediatorial purposes. He was set up and ordained as Head of the elect. Universal sovereignty is entrusted to Him for the advancement of the Divine glory in the salvation of sinners. For the accomplishment of this high

design, and the full manifestation of His mediatorial glory, it was indispenably required that the Mediator's dominion should be over the whole universe of created objects and interests. Now, in the fullest and most comprehensive sense, all are under the rule of the Mediator. He is set over the works of Jehovah's hands; and all are put in subjection under His feet. This extensive authority and power of the Mediator is long-suffering to a guilty and rebellious world, comfort and hope to the church, and terror and destruction to all her enemies. All the aspects of His sovereign rule, all the acts of His administration, are in wisdom and love to His servants. A rainbow, in sight like an emerald, the token of the covenant of peace, surrounds the throne. (Rev. iv. 3.) "He must reign till all His and His people's enemies are put under His feet." (1 Cor. xv. 24.)

This crown is the Redeemer's *exclusive Headship* over the church. "He is Head of the body—the church." (Col. i. 18.) The church, which He loved and chose from eternity, and which He redeemed by His blood, He has the sole right to govern. He is, emphatically, the *only* Head of the *invisible* church of ransomed saints. He is their living and life-giving Head. United to Him by the Spirit and by faith, they live and are one with Him. Their Maker is their Husband; their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. He is their living and glorious Head—identical with them in interest and honour; and they one with Him by the closest, most tender, and indissoluble union. The Saviour is likewise the *exclusive* Head of the visible church. He alone organises, preserves, and governs her. He rules the church with a golden sceptre, as a king his loyal subjects. The Mediator is the church's *legislative* Head. He originates all her laws, and presides in their administration. The whole government and discipline of the church are prescribed by Him, and to be exercised in entire dependence on His power and wisdom, and in accordance with His revealed will. His prerogative

as King of Zion is to appoint officers, to direct and uphold them, and to bless their administration. He presides in the ordinances of His house, and renders the means of grace effectual for accomplishing His designs of mercy and love. The church which the Redeemer has founded He preserves in the earth, despite of all enemies and opposition, and conducts forward to universal establishment and glorious triumph. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it." (Isa. ii. 2.) As He reigns in the church, He renders all subservient to her best interests. He is her Head of glory and honour, from whom are derived all her distinctive excellency and her high privileges. The church, replenished by Christ, her glorious King, is "His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 23.) He that is the church's Beloved, and "the chiefest among ten thousand," has "His head as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy, and black like a raven." (Song v. 11.) The Redeemer is the church's *perpetual* Head throughout all ages till the end of time. When the designs of His providential rule shall have been accomplished, in the subversion of all opposing power, and in the gathering into one and perfecting of the saints, He will wear the crown of the church triumphant throughout eternity. The queen, adorned with gold of Ophir, is brought to the palace of the King, to abide with Him for ever. The saints who have fought the battle and won the victory, shall sit down as conquerors with Christ upon His throne, as He has overcome, and is set down with His Father on His throne.

He wears the *crown of the nations of the earth*, and has *supreme dominion over the universe*. He is "the Governor among the nations" (Ps. xxii. 18); therefore He claims, by proper right, the submission of civil rulers of whatever rank, and that national homage should be rendered to Him. "To Thee doth it appertain, O King of nations." (Jer. x. 7.)

Christ Jesus is "Head of every man" (1 Cor. xi. 3), as He has supreme power over men of every condition and character; and He employs them to effect His purposes. He is "Prince of the kings of the earth;" and while "many crowns" sparkle on His head, He has a name written on His vesture and thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Rev. xix. 16.) As manifesting His exclusive right to this high title, He organises nations, and gives them a national existence; He fixes the times and bounds of their dominion; He claims that their constitution and laws should be accordant with His revealed will. His eyes behold the nations. He deals with them as subjects of His moral law, rewarding them according as national affairs are conducted in subservience to His authority, and punishing them for acts of national rebellion. Civil rulers are required to be Christ's "ministers of God to men for good." (Rom. xiii. 4.) They should possess scriptural qualifications, fear God, and hate covetousness, and kiss the Son in official homage and loving subjection. They should rule in righteousness, be nursing fathers to the church, and take the Divine law as the unerring rule of all their official conduct. The Redeemer, as supreme and universal Sovereign, sends His ambassadors throughout the nations, and gathers out of them subjects of His spiritual kingdom. The end of all national changes and revolutions will be the universal visible establishment of the dominion of Christ. Great voices from heaven proclaim in the downfall of mystical Babylon, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xix. 6; xi. 15.)

The universal Headship of the Mediator over the nations is an essential part of His royal authority and glory. This is the *present truth*, which faithful witnesses are called to confess, and, if required, to suffer for even unto blood. Nations are prospered or are smitten—decay

or perish, according as they own Christ as their Head, and submit to His authority, or rebel against Him.

To Him alone pertains the *crown of His people's individual salvation, and of eternal glory*. He is the "Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Heb. v. 9.) The word which He sends forth is "the word of a King in which there is power." He sets up His kingdom in human hearts, and He rules in and over "a willing people." He opens His royal treasures, and with princely munificence confers upon them all the blessings of His kingdom. He reigns to bring down all His and their enemies. He gives grace and glory, and from His saints withholds no good thing. At length, as kings and priests, they sit down with Him upon His throne, and each one of them receives from Him an unfading crown. (Rev. iii. 21; 2 Tim. iv. 10.) Of all this high dignity and extensive dominion the Redeemer claims exclusively to wear the crown, and His people willingly ascribe it to Him. The crown of conquest, too, the garland of victory, is His. Hence He is said to have on His head "many crowns." As the illustrious Captain of salvation, He has fought many battles and achieved many victories. When He shall have effected, in behalf of His cause and people, full conquest, and all enemies have been put under His feet, He will preside as a Prince and a Saviour over the ransomed host in glory. These will form the many sparkling jewels of His mediatorial crown. "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endureth throughout all generations." (Ps. cxlv. 13.)

II. HOW THE MEDIATOR COMES TO POSSESS THIS CROWN.

When the Redeemer was on earth He was "despised and rejected of men." His kingly authority was set at nought and contemned, as it still is throughout the world. At the close of His life of obedience, and when He endured His last sufferings, the utmost possible indignity was

heaped upon Him, by Herod, and the people of the Jews. He was buffeted and scourged, clothed with mock habiliments of royalty—a purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed as a contemptible sceptre. Notwithstanding, in His lowest abasement, He was proclaimed “the King of the Jews;” and when crucified in weakness, He performed royal acts which displayed His absolute authority over all creatures, and His lordship over the invisible world. He is now gloriously exalted above all principality and power. He has the highest title to the crown which He wears. He has, moreover, all fitness to possess it; and to the fullest extent His undisputed right of universal dominion will yet be confessed.

It is His by *covenant grant*. From everlasting He was set King upon the hill of Zion. (Ps. ii. 7.) When morey is said to be built up for ever, the *foundation* of the glorious plan is the covenant made with the Father's chosen One; and the guarantee for its sure accomplishment is the throne of the Mediator, built up to all generations. (Ps. lxxxix. 2, 3.) The engagement in the covenant to the Surety was that, after His atoning sufferings, He should see His seed, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in His hand. Because He poured out His soul to the death, and was numbered with the transgressors, He was assigned a portion with the great, and He divides the spoil with the strong. The oath of Jehovah in the covenant constitutes the Redeemer a King-priest—a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. (Ps. cx. 4.)

He has the crown as *the reward of His obedience to the death*. Expressly is it declared—“For the suffering of death, He has been crowned with glory and honour” (Hob. ii. 7), and “all things have been put in subjection under His feet.” And again, “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” (Phil. ii. 8, 9.) The sufferings of the Saviour were intense and infinitely meritorious; they

are therefore appropriately followed with a boundless reward. The diadem of glory succeeds the crown of thorns; the golden sceptre of righteousness was taken up when the rod of indignity had inflicted its last strokes. The finished work of the Redeemer fulfilled the purpose of Jehovah, and glorified all the Divine perfections. The high reward which was given Him displays God's covenant faithfulness, and the surpassing glory which the Saviour merited.

He alone is fit to sustain the weight of this high honour. His is almighty power. He has sovereign authority. He is the wisdom of God; and "all treasures of wisdom and knowledge" belong to Him. He is most condescending, and full of tender pity and compassion. When He appeared in triumph on the eve of His suffering, He came as Zion's King, "meek and lowly, riding on an ass, and on a colt the foal of an ass." (Zech. ix. 9.) The character of His dominion fulfils ancient prediction: "He shall judge the poor of the people; He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." (Ps. lxxii. 4.) He never changes. He is "the Father of eternity."* His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of His dominion there shall be no end. Through the mediatorial rule, one glorious purpose is carried out throughout all time and to eternity. The Man, the BRANCH, builds and rules the temple, and He alone is fit to bear the glory. The Lamb as it had been slain, the Lion of Judah's tribe, is worthy to open the sealed book; and when He takes it for this purpose, the redeemed and holy angels, and all creatures throughout the universe, ascribe to Him all honour, and glory, and blessing, as being alone fitted for the high undertaking. He is infinitely qualified to wear the diadem, sway the sceptre, and conduct to a glorious issue the whole administration.

* Isaiah ix. 6. So is the rendering of the Septuagint.

He now *actually* reigns, as He has done in all time past. Christ Jesus is King *de facto*, possessed of actual regal authority and dominion, as well as King *de jure*, having the right to reign. The crown that He wears *doth* now flourish upon Him, as it has done in time past, and will do in the ages to come. We do not yet see all things put under Him; but by faith we behold "Jesus, for the suffering of death, clothed with glory and honour." (Heb. ii. 9.) He reigns in the church, presiding in the dispensation of ordinances, and giving efficacy to the word of His grace. He rules in the heart of a willing people, dispensing pardons, giving abounding peace, supplying their wants with princely munificence, restraining and conquering their enemies, and bringing them home in due time to glory. In the kingdom of providence, too, and as Governor among the nations, He executes sovereign and unlimited control. He brings down one earthly ruler, and sets another up. He cuts off the spirit of princes, and appears terrible to the kings of the earth. He "removes the diadem, and takes off the crown," and overturns powers that oppose Him, till He comes whose right it is, and it shall be given Him. He executes judgments on ungodly nations. He sits upon the throne which is over the wheels, and directs the whole administration, so as to bring out of all movements a blessed issue. In the "shaking of all nations," the "Desire of all nations" shall come. His "name shall be great among the Gentiles," and incense and a pure offering shall be offered to Him, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." (Mal. i. 11.) The whole earth shall be filled with His glory. All earthly crowns and sceptres shall yet be prostrate at His feet. "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (Dan. vii. 27.)

III. THE CROWN FLOURISHING UPON HIM.

The original expression is emphatic and strongly expressive. "Upon Himself," as upon none other, and as having inherent right and pre-ominent fitness, shall His crown shine—*bloom and blossom* in perpetual beauty and vigour.

This crown so flourishes on the Redeemer's head, *despite of all enemies and opposition*. In all ages past the dominion of the Redeemer has been contemned and resolutely opposed, and as yet it is generally rejected throughout the world. Men individually rebel against His authority, and say proudly, "We have no king but Cæsar." Some are opposed to the Saviour's power and Godhead; others reject His reign of free grace; while the potentates of earth and their followers generally reject His mediatorial Headship. "The kings of the earth make war with the Lamb." "The rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (Rev. xvii. 14; Ps. ii. 2, 3.) As far as the esteem of the great and the mighty of earth is concerned, it is yet sadly true that "His glory has ceased, and His throne is cast down to the ground." (Ps. lxxxix. 44.) Notwithstanding—despite of all opposition—His throne stands unshaken. He must reign till all enemies are brought under His feet. Upon Himself His crown continually flourishes.

It shall never *wear old or fade*. The crowns of mortal princes are worn only for a brief space. Earthly sovereignties decay, and the sceptre of extended power passes into other hands. Christ's dominion is perpetually young and vigorous. "His head is as the most fine gold, and His locks are bushy and black as a raven." (Song v. 11.) "His name shall endure for ever; it shall propagate itself in presence of the sun." (Ps. lxxii. 17.) When the four great world-powers have risen in succession, decayed, and perished, the dominion of the Redeemer is "an everlasting

dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. vii. 14.)

The crown of the Mediator yields precious fruits. It "shall bloom or blossom upon Himself." The "horn of David shall bud forth pleasantly." As the rod of Aaron blossomed and bore almonds when the rods of the princes remained dry and lifeless, so the power of the enthroned Mediator continually yields living fruits, mellow, fresh, and most valuable. His government is *benignant*. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." (Isa. xi. 5.) "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness." (Ps. lxxii. 3.) He shall establish peace on earth; and oppression and violence shall cease. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall the people learn war any more." "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa. ii. 4; xxvii. 6.) When the Redeemer's kingdom shall be fully established, "the wilderness and solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." (Isa. xxxv. 1.)

Saints and holy angels see with delight this crown flourishing. Much of the work of true faith consists in such a vision. The "daughters of Zion go forth to behold king Solomon with the crown with which His mother crowned Him." (Song iii. 11.) We see Jesus now as a crowned Prince ruling in His house, and as "Head over all things to the church." All the confidence, comfort, and hope of the saints are connected with this vision. Angels, as they surround His throne, and go forth to execute His commands, worship the Lamb, and ascribe to Him all worth and worthiness. As He unfolds the Divine purposes, and directs the providential administration, He goes forth with His bow and His crown, conquering and to conquer. Enemies become His footstool; the crowns of the redeemed are, in token of heart-felt homage, cast prostrate at His feet, while palms—the symbols of victories which

He works for them, or enables them to achieve—are all waved in His honour. The refulgent brightness of the Mediator's crown will be eminently displayed at the close of the dispensation. When nations shall be born in a day, then national homage shall be willingly and universally rendered to Him; "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii. 14.) The saints shall rejoice with highest admiration and delight at the full establishment of the Redeemer's large and great dominion. And as His kingdom on earth gives place to the glorious reign of eternity, with enraptured praise saints and holy angels exult in the bright display of the Redeemer's crown, and in the riches of His everlasting kingdom.

IN CONCLUSION.

This manifestation of the supreme and universal dominion of the Redeemer suggests the most important practical views, alike to saints and to those to whom the message of the Gospel is spoken. It calls to solemn *self-trial*. Have we seen Christ as a crowned Prince, invested with universal dominion, and setting up His throne in our hearts? If so, we cannot but admire and love Him. "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on His head. His glory is great in Thy salvation: honour and majesty hast Thou laid upon Him." (Ps. xxi. 3, 5.) Other princes and crowns appear before Him as nothing. If we have received Him, we have learned to account all but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Him as our Lord and Saviour.

An *eminent exercise of faith* is to give all glory to this exalted King, and to contemplate the crown flourishing upon His head. The large free offer of the Gospel is "the word of a King in which there is power." It calls and invites rebels and wanderers; and, when rendered effectual, becomes the rod of Jehovah's strength, by which a people are made willing in the day of His power. By

faith we touch the golden sceptre in His hand and live. We go in to the King and put the crown of our personal salvation upon His head, depending wholly upon Him for effecting it, and ascribing to Him the undivided glory. We look to Him and are saved. As we yield ourselves to the Lord, and submit to His sovereign dominion, we declare: "Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." (Isa. xxvi. 13.) The whole life of faith consists in looking to Jesus as a suffering Saviour, and in beholding Him in His exaltation-glory. As the reward of His finished work, He is now invested with all power and authority in heaven and earth. By faith we behold Him throned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the Head of all principality and power, and reigning till His enemies have been made His footstool. He presides in ordinances, displaying in them His glory, and rendering them channels of blessing to His people. He directs the whole administration in providence, rendering every movement subservient to the designs of His grace, and making all things work together for the good of His saints. He has the keys of hell and of death; to Him belongs the lordship over the invisible world. He alone has the right to wear the crown of His people's salvation; and the diadem of glory for ever glitters upon His head. He is thus the blessed Object, as He is the Author and Finisher of faith; and our great interest and high privilege is thus over to behold Him and delight in Him.

The grand matter of *right profession and earnest contending* is connected with the universal dominion of Messiah, the Prince. If we have embraced Christ Jesus as our own Saviour, we cannot possibly be indifferent to the doctrine of His royal Headship. Faith views Him as the Son of God, and at the same time rejoices in His supreme mediatorial authority. (Gal. ii. 20, 21.) He can be no Saviour for sinners if His name is not "Immanuel"—God with us; if He is not "the Lord, mighty to save."

He has "power on earth to forgive sins," and is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins." (Acts v. 31.) He alone has the right to reign supreme over all persons and interests; and He claims the willing subjection of all to His sovereign authority. Our paramount duty is to swear allegiance to Him, and to confess Him before men as our only Lord and God. In all past ages this has been a main article of a right profession of religion; and it will certainly be so in all ages yet to come. The name inscribed upon His vesture and His thigh—"King of kings, and Lord of lords," is designed to be conspicuously seen, as it is admired and delighted in by all His faithful servants. Our duty is to confess joyfully the supreme Headship of the Mediator, and never in principle or practice to compromise our allegiance to Him. While we personally walk as His devoted subjects, our whole profession should find expression in the fervent desires—"Let King Jesus reign." "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven!"

The universal dominion of the Saviour is *fitted to inspire all confidence respecting the future destinies of the church and the world.* The "government" in its whole extent "is upon His shoulders," and the "pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hand." He rules in Jacob, and is the church's King in the midst of her. Nothing can therefore remove her; and no tongue or power of enemies can prevail against her. The church's illustrious Head will ever purify, protect, and bless her. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." All changes within and without must contribute to promote the best interests of the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom. All earthly powers will be made to subserve the cause of Christ. The fixed decree of heaven is, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." (Isa. lx. 12.) "The mountain of the Lord's house shall yet be established on

the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it." (Isa. ii. 2.) The world, under the mediatorial rule, is conducting forward to a final destiny of honour and glory. After manifold shakings of the heavens and the earth, the kingdom that cannot be shaken shall be brought in and remain.

Finally—God's people may *expect all blessings from their exalted King, and may cherish the assured hope of glory*, as they trust in His gracious and powerful dominion. For them He purchased all blessings—temporal, spiritual, and eternal. He now reigns to dispense "unsearchable riches." The stores of both worlds are in His hands; and all fulness, ever accessible and inexhaustible, is lodged in Him for the wants of His saints. From His crown and sceptre all needed supplies constantly flow. He gives with royal munificence, consulting His own honour rather than their deserts, and giving to the suppliants at His throne exceeding abundantly above all that they are able to ask or think. The treasures of His kingdom are susceptible of no diminution. He is honoured by His people's importunity, when they ask largely, and will take no denial. He opens His hand liberally, and supplies the need of every creature that lives. To His saints He gives "grace and glory, and withholds no good thing." He gives the Spirit—the seal of the promise, and the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. He is now within His people's hearts "the hope of glory." And while they gaze on His flourishing crown, and trust in His powerful, gracious dominion, they look forward with desire and joy for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour." (Titus ii. 14.) In a little time this hope will be to them a glorious reality. Its blessed object shall be fully enjoyed. Brought to sit down with the Redeemer on His throne, they shall behold with ecstatic wonder and delight His crown flourishing upon Himself; and they themselves reflecting, as sparkling jewels, the brightness and beauty of His glory for ever.

THE DUTY AND BLESSEDNESS OF KISSING THE SON.

PSALM ii. 12—" Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

THE second Psalm furnishes a clear and satisfactory answer to the objection advanced by those who plead for the use of human hymns in New Testament worship, namely, that the inspired psalms are unfit for Gospel praise, because they do not show forth the salvation and glory of the Redeemer. This sentiment betrays gross ignorance, and shows that those who uphold it are unacquainted with the matter of the psalms, and that they have not seen the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in Christ, nor His glory in the type realising its substance in the antitype.

This psalm, which is truly a sublime ode of great poetic beauty from beginning to end, is full of the glory of the Saviour, as God's eternal Son, set up in the Divine decree, King upon the holy hill of Zion—the Prophet, Priest, and King of the covenant. Now exalted to supreme power, His kingdom is destined to bring down and destroy all opposition, and one day to fill the whole earth. For Him all worship, obedience, and subjection are justly claimed, to whom alone by proper right they are due, and to Him they will yet be willingly and universally rendered.

This psalm is properly the *first* in the book of the church's inspired praise; for what we designate the first may be regarded as a preface to the whole collection. It is throughout *Messianic*. So the ancient Jews generally regarded it; and to the Redeemer, and to none other, is it

repeatedly applied in the New Testament. Its lofty expressions cannot be used with propriety in reference to David, or Solomon, or any earthly king. The names and titles employed are too exalted to designate any human monarch: the extent of His dominion, and the perpetuity of His empire, cannot be predicated of the rule of a created sovereign. Nor can the promise in the text to those who put their trust in Him, and the threatening against those who disobey Him, relate to any earthly potentate, however mighty or exalted.

In the eighth and ninth verses the connection is declared between Christ asking in His intercession in heaven, and His people on earth fervently pleading, and the universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. This grand design will be effected by judgments poured out upon inveterate enemies and ungodly systems. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Then kings and earth's judges are addressed in terms of solemn warning and impressive exhortation. They are called to "be wise and be instructed," and their grand and constant duty is comprehensively declared: "Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling." They are under paramount obligation to render unto the Governor among the nations devoted homage, with reverence and deep apprehensions of the dread consequences of all disobedience. Their rejoicing should be with "trembling," knowing that He is the sin-avenger, inflexibly just and almighty to save or destroy. Such commingled feelings in God's service spring from views of His mercy, inspired by His purpose and promise, and from apprehensions of His wrath, caused by His threatenings against transgressors. Then these counsels and warnings are summarily presented in the brief but comprehensive command of the text, and in the declaration at the close of the result of provoking this glorious Holy One, and, on the other hand, of trusting in His mercy and salvation. May the Spirit of all grace guide

and bless in speaking and hearing! May He glorify Christ, and take the things which are His, and show them to us!

I. CONSIDER THE COMMAND, AS PRIMARILY LAID UPON
EARTHLY RULERS AND NATIONS.

The change of expression in the eleventh and twelfth verses is observable. "Serve the Lord," or Jehovah, might seem to have respect to Him as an absolute Sovereign, without regard to any other person. But the attention is immediately directed again to the Son begotten from eternity, and set up in the Divine purpose as anointed King on Zion. While the Father and the Son are thus proclaimed co-equal in power and glory, the highest honour is ascribed to the Son; and He is represented as He to whom all homage is to be rendered, if men would escape destruction.

The immediate reference is obviously, from the connection in the context, to earthly rulers. Kings and judges, spoken of before, are enjoined to "Kiss the Son." They are to escape His wrath by honouring and obeying Him, and to seek the happiness that arises from sure confidence in Him. The willing submission of civil rulers to the enthroned Redeemer, and the dedication of natural sovereignty to Him, is a main article of a scriptural testimony in all ages—a precious part of the "Faith that was once delivered to the saints." It is required of us greatly to value it, faithfully to maintain it, and transmit it unimpaired to future generations. The best interests of churches and nations are concerned in solemnly professing and holding it fast. However unheeded now may be a testimony for the royal rights of the Mediator, it will one day be universally acknowledged, and will yet triumph over all opposition. Nations and rulers should kiss the Son, because Christ Jesus, *the Mediator, is supreme Ruler over nations, and they are accountable to Him.* In the eternal covenant, He was set up as King on Zion. He that comes forth to Jehovah to be "Ruler in Israel," had His "goings forth from of old, from everlasting." (Mic. v. 2.) Among

His august titles, He is designated "King of nations," and "Governor among the nations." (Jer. x. 7; Ps. xxii. 28.) This sovereignty pertains to Him as the high reward of His obedience unto death. (Heb. ii. 9.) He is "Messiah, Prince of the kings of the earth." (Rev. i. 5.) "Upon His vesture and thigh He has a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Rev. xix. 16.) Nations are under law to Christ. He organises them, assigns them the bounds of their habitation, sets up rulers over them, prescribing them proper qualifications, and requiring of them entire submission to His authority. He is exalted to the mediatorial throne, that "all people, and nations, and languages should serve Him." (Dan vii. 14.) Nations exist as such only in this world; they are therefore rewarded or punished in the present life according as they honour the Redeemer and submit to His law, or disobey His commands, and place themselves in rebellion against Him. He occupies the seat of supreme dominion, that He may subvert all opposing power. He overturns in succession hostile powers, till He come "whose right it is," and it shall be given Him. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, all those nations shall be utterly wasted." (Isa. lx. 12.)

The duty of nations and their rulers *is professed homage and subjection to the Mediator in all things.* The Divine command, as addressed to earthly rulers and people, is very full and expressive: "Kiss the Son." Anciently this action was the conventional symbol of respect shown to a sovereign, and was the accepted token of yielding him civil homage. (1 Sam. x. 1.) Orientals yet kiss the head or feet, or the dress of superiors, when they would testify toward them reverential regard, or profess subjection to their authority.* It is required of all men, whether as individuals or organised bodies, that they honour the Son,

* *Xenophon* says, "The Persians were accustomed to kiss those whom they held in honour." *Drusius* translates the expression—"Receive Him for your Lord and King."

even as they honour the Father. They are to manifest heart homage to Him in their public spirit and actions. They are required to do Him the highest honour, by giving Him the chief place in their hearts. They should set Him on the throne. Princely sceptres and dindoms are to be lowered to Him; and to Him, as being alone worthy, should be rendered the unconstrained and entire homage of the heart and life. The Father has put all in subjection under Him; and His purpose, clearly revealed in the word, is that He should be universally loved and obeyed. The true dignity of nations—the highest honour of princes, are to receive His law as the rule of their lives and official conduct, and to subject themselves to His will in all things. In the day of predicted gladness and blessing to the nations, “The isles shall wait for His law;” their legislation will be conformed to His word, and the riches and glory of the nations shall be dedicated to the advancement of His glory.

Suitable expressions of national allegiance are to be rendered to the Redeemer. In ancient times the kiss was expressive of devoted attachment and servile obedience. The hidden church in the days of Elijah did not bow the knee to Baal, and their lips did not kiss him. Under the apostacy of the ten tribes it was said, “Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.” (Hos. xiii. 2.) In the early form of Sabeian worship, men were accustomed to put their hand to their mouth,* as denoting their worshipping the host of heaven. (Job xxxi. 27.) Nations and their rulers are under obligation to profess openly allegiance to Messiah, the Prince. To them is addressed the command—“Vow and pay to the Lord your God.” Their vow should be full, explicit, and offered under the most solemn sanctions. In this important matter there can be no divided allegiance. Nations and their rulers should, without reserve, yield themselves and consecrate their resources to

* Hence is derived the word *adore*—as from *ad*, to, and *os* the mouth.

the Mediator, to serve Him and to promote His glory. "All people will walk every one in the name of his god; but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." (Micah iv. 5.) A suitable expression of national allegiance to the Redeemer is *public covenanting*. This was made in times of enlargement and blessing by God's ancient people, under the old economy, and has been exemplified in eras of revival under the new. Our illustrious fathers aimed, in the national covenant of Scotland, and solemn league of the three kingdoms, to give the fullest expression of national allegiance to Christ and His truth. These memorable deeds were justly designated by a noble martyr the "marriage tie" between the enthroned Mediator and the nation, which no power in hell or earth can dissolve.* The binding obligation of these covenants still rests on the nation; and they will hereafter, when fully acknowledged, prove an eminent means of revival and blessing. "People and the kingdoms" shall assemble in joint confederation "to serve the Lord." "Five cities in Egypt land shall swear to the Lord of hosts," "yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and shall perform it." (Ps. cii. 22; Isa. xix. 18, 21.) And at the promised period of national repentance and restoration, "the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." (Jer. l. 4, 5.)

By *national worship*, and removing all that would oppose and dishonour Him, nations and rulers kiss the Son. Spiritual homage is due by princes and their people to the Saviour, and we are assured that it will yet be rendered to Him. "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and

* The Marquis of Argyle.

in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." (Mal. i. 11.) "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him. And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." (Ps. lxxii. 9-11, 15.) This national homage to Christ the Lord is rendered by framing the constitution of government according to His word, setting up rulers, and enacting laws in His name. The Scriptures, the statute-book of heaven, are to be taken as the basis and guide of all rule—legislative, judicial, and executive; and it is eminently befitting that all the acts of rulers should be done in the way of express public acknowledgment of the authority of the Governor among the nations, and of invoking His presence and blessing. Provision should be made for the national observance of the *Sabbath*. All open violations of the Lord's day, by the post-office, railways, and by public acts of the legislature, and of magistrates, supreme and subordinate, are to be discountenanced and disallowed. The national observance of a day of sacred rest is indispensable to the offering of national worship to the enthroned Mediator. The original Sabbath-law expressly enjoins this; for the due observance of the Sabbath, by "the stranger within the gates," is the legitimate concern of the civil magistrate. The right observance of the Sabbath by nations and rulers brings with it national blessings; while, on the other hand, Sabbath-breaking communities have ever been vicious, disturbed, and unhappy. The national appointment, too, of days of fasting, on account of national sins and public calamities, and of seasons of thanksgiving for deliverances and mercies, exemplifies the worship which nations and rulers render to the Redeemer, and is

frequently followed by public blessings. All idolatrous and superstitious worship should be discountenanced by rulers who profess allegiance and subjection to Christ. It cannot but be regarded as a gross iniquity to take the Saviour, pledged by oath, as is done at the coronation of British rulers, to support it. Much may be done by magistrates—without invading the legitimate province of conscience—to remove hindrances to true national worship, and in supplying scriptural means for instructing the people of a nation of all classes in the knowledge of God, and in leading them universally to render Him the homage that is due to His name.

The *real blessing of nations and their rulers* is found here, as they will assuredly undergo Jehovah's wrathful displeasure if they refuse and rebel. "Blessed are all they that thus put their trust in Him." Kings and people, as Israel and Judah under godly princes, and in reforming times, were remarkably delivered from powerful enemies, and were greatly prospered. Small and weak nations have become great and powerful in the way of serving Christ and His cause. Geneva and Scotland, in the times of reformation, and at eras of covenanting, triumphed over powerful foes, internal and external, and stood forth conspicuous as examples to nations in all future ages. Britain, when maintaining true Protestantism, and advancing the kingdom of Christ, enjoyed peace and abundant prosperity as the fruit of scriptural truth professed, and of spiritual blessings conferred. When, again, nations have cast off allegiance to Messiah, the Prince, become rebellious, or have fostered erroneous and idolatrous systems, their glory has departed, and they have been wasted and brought down. It is ever true of nations, equally as of individuals: "Them that honour Me will I honour; but they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Ungodly rulers are doomed to disappointment in all their policy. They are overthrown, cut off, and perish. When Jehovah, whom they contemned, is

angry, and His wrath is onkindled, their power is broken, and themselves destroyed. "He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries." (Ps. cx. 6.) If rulers and nations would escape this destruction, and realise national prosperity and blessing, their true and highest interest is by professed homage and subjection, suitable expressions of allegiance, and pure national worship, to kiss the Son, giving Him continually the honour which is due unto His name.

II. THE COMMAND AND WARNING CONSIDERED AS ADDRESSED TO ALL WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL.

The command strongly presents before us the illustrious object as worthy of all devoted homage and honour. He is exhibited as—

The Son, our Divine, all-sufficient Saviour. The original designation here employed (*Bar*) is peculiar and significant. Instead of the ordinary word for son (*Ben*), which means one that builds up a house, this is taken from a root which signifies to *create*, and plainly refers to His Godhead, as the only-begotten of the Father. He is the eternal Son of God—the Father's own proper Son. So did the Jews regard the Messiah promised, when our Lord was manifested in the flesh. (Matt. xxvi. 63; Mark xvi. 16; John i. 49.) In His true eternal Godhead lies the only foundation of all the worship and obedience that are claimed by the Saviour, and that are yielded to Him by angels or men. A Divine person alone can save us. The object of heart-felt trust and confidence must be possessed of all the attributes of Deity, and have the "fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life." (1 John v. 11, 12.) Life in Christ is life in a Divine-human person. Like the Apostle, every believer may say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

We kiss the Son when *we are brought through Him into a state of reconciliation*. The kiss is the token of quarrels being terminated, and peace and friendship restored. Thus Esau embraced Jacob when they met together after the Divine manifestation at Peniel. (Gen. xxxiii. 4.) The father meeting the prodigal as he returned from the far country, ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, in token of entire forgiveness and full restoration to favour. Christ Jesus is the only way of reconciliation between God and the sinner. He is the Daysman and Mediator of the covenant—our stable and assured peace. As we draw near to God through Him, we lay down the weapons of our hostility, and are reconciled through His blood. We take hold of His strength, and make peace with God. We enter into a league of perpetual friendship with Him; and while we come to Him as reconciled and reconciling the world unto Himself, the enmity on our part is slain. The woman that "was a sinner," when she approached the Saviour in token of her faith, and as the expression of her humility and devoted attachment, kissed His feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. So do we come to Jesus and attest our love to Him and confidence in Him. The reconciliation begins on His part, and the sense of it is imparted to the soul by the renowned discoveries of His condescending love. The language of the heart in coming to Jesus and receiving the atonement is, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine." (Song i. 2.)

The action is that of *heart-felt adoration*. Possessed of true and proper Divinity, the Son is entitled to all worship and honour. Angels of light adore Him. The church universal is commanded to worship Him as her Lord. (Ps. xlv. 11.) The ransomed on earth and heaven sing the new song, ascribing the highest homage to the Lamb who stands in the midst of the throne; while holy angels

willingly unite in offering to Him exultant praise. We learn to sing the new song here in offering frequent praises to the Lamb, and are thus prepared to sing it in glory. When the Apostle, assailed by the messenger of Satan, "prayed the Lord thrice," he received the memorable assurance, intended for all times and circumstances, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 9.) The expression of faith and love, when the Saviour's condescending grace is displayed, and unbelief is forgiven, is the utterance of the doubting disciple: "My Lord, and my God." (John xx. 28.) And in life and at death the most appropriate act of confidence and desire is that of Stephen resigning the soul and its undying interests into the Saviour's hands: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." We kiss the Son not only by making Him our way to the Father, but likewise by regarding Him as the direct object of adoration and praise.

Obedience to the command is *shown in supreme love to the Saviour*. The kiss is the accepted symbol of true affection. Thus does a mother give frequent expression to her tender feelings toward her child; and thus the love of the heart is manifested towards endeared friends in life and at death. Christ Jesus is precious to all that believe; the centre of their affections; the great object to them of spiritual desire and delight. When the Spirit sheds abroad in the heart the love of the unseen Saviour, we love Him with every kind of love in the highest degree—with esteem, gratitude, and complacency. We love Him with the whole heart, and above all other objects in heaven and earth. The love of saints to Christ is the strongest conjugal affection that brooks no rival, and is ever jealous of any distraction or decay. The love of Christ "*constrains us*"—acts with concentrated force, and impels us to constant devotedness of life to His service. "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." (Song viii. 7.) The distinguishing

trait of the renewed character is this constant spiritual affection toward Christ and all that is His. In the language of *John Newton*: "There is no believer who does not desire to love Christ as the angels do; and who does not daily lament that he can love Him so little!" The Saviour, who is jealous of the love of His people's hearts, ever addresses to them the individual inquiry, "Lovest thou Me?" Our appropriate response should always be: "Thou, who knowest all things, knowest that I love Thee." (John xxi. 17.)

This supreme love to Christ and heart-felt trust in Him is shown in frequent *solemn vowing* and true *devotedness of life*. In coming to Christ, we take hold of the covenant of redemption, and enter into a sacred league of friendship with Him. We swear fealty to Him, and pledge to Him the homage of our hearts and lives. As Samuel kissed Saul when he anointed him king, and as Jonathan and David in parting, with tokens of the strongest affection, made a mutual covenant to confirm their friendship, so do we bind ourselves to the Beloved. We vow to Him, as our only Lord and Master, to take on us His yoke, give ourselves up to be ruled by His laws, to be disposed of by His providence, and to be entirely devoted to His service. Our whole work is a service of love to Christ, as the high reward which He gives to His servants is the bestowal of condescending tokens of His special favour. This is the comfort and joy of true servants of God, while they are employed in the arduous and difficult parts of their Master's work; and this is not unfrequently the blessing that rests on their work at its close. The sacred historian records of Moses that "he died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." (Deut. xxxiv. 5.) The Hebrew expression is literally, "at the mouth of the Lord," which Jewish writers say, means "by the kisses of the Lord," intimating that the person and work of His servant was accepted, and that in death he enjoyed special tokens of the love of God, and had ministered to him an abundant

entrance into His everlasting kingdom. Thus, in vowing to the Lord, we render Him the love of the heart, and the joyful service of the life; and thus, in life and death, we realise the high privilege of acceptance and peculiar favour.

III. THE BLESSING OF TRUSTING IN HIM, AND THE WARNING TO THE UNBELIEVING.

"Lest ye perish from the way; when His wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

This proclaims *Christ Jesus, our enthroned King, the only object of heart-felt trust.* His name is Jehovah of hosts, His people's covenant God. To Him pertains all power, grace, and salvation. His unfailing promises are all yea and amen in Him. He has all fulness for supplying all the wants of His redeemed, and this is ever accessible and inexhaustible. With the heart we believe in this precious Saviour, and appropriate His salvation. We trust not in princes, and have no confidence in the flesh. "Happy alone is the man who has the God of Jacob for his help." (Ps. cxvi. 3, 5.) Our most important duty is to "trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isa. xxvi. 4.) And this trust is, at the same time, our highest privilege. "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." (Isa. xii. 2.)

This is *true living faith and joyful hope.* Faith in Christ is not mere belief in a testimony—it is appropriation of a Person, and confidence reposed in Him. Such was Abraham's faith when "he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." We trust in the shadow of Jehovah's wings. We embrace, as most suited to us, His Person, righteousness, and promise. We confide in His power, grace, love, and seasonable help. The Saviour is made known to us, as not only our strong Rock to shelter

in and build upon, but likewise as our sure and blessed Hope for the future. Embracing Him by faith, He is "Christ within us, the hope of glory." (Col. i. 27.) The grace of God that bringeth salvation effectually teaches us to forsake sin, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 14.) They are blessed who have their hope, as an anchor of the soul, within the veil, "sure and steadfast, whither the Forerunner has for us entered." (Heb. vi. 19.)

They who trust and hope in Christ are *blessed in the day of wrath, when others are cast off and perish*. Even when His wrath *soon burns*,* the righteous are safe. The objects of Divine vengeance either perish *by* the way, and are cut down before they reach the proposed end, or they perish *from* the way, as they meet the doom of backsliders and apostates. "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the *transgressors shall fall therein*." (Hos. xiv. 9.) While hypocrites are rejected, and apostates and transgressors are destroyed, the righteous are preserved in perilous times, and a marked distinction is put between them and the enemies of the King. They are blessed in making God their refuge. He is their stronghold in trouble, and their pavilion in the evil day. They are saved from the wrath to come. They are sealed in their foreheads when others around them are cut off, and the commissioned instruments of vengeance are forbidden to come near them. However chastened of the Lord, they are exempted from the doom of the ungodly. There is no poison in their cup of suffering. The afflictions allotted to them are not penal or wrathful. They yield to

* The Hebrew is thus more suitably rendered. The adverb refers rather to the *time* than to the *intensity* of Jehovah's anger. Properly speaking, if God's wrath is excited at all, it is not a *little*, but *greatly* enkindled.

them afterward "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." In the hand of the Spirit, they promote their sanctification, and confer a meetness for the heavenly inheritance. "Light and momentary," they work out "a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) The "trial of their faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, is found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 7.)

This blessedness belongs to *all who trust* in the God of salvation. Emphatically is it declared—"Blessed are *all* that put their trust in Him;"—all that are gathered to Christ in every age, from whatever land, whatever was their previous state, bond or free, ignorant and degraded, however weak their faith, or imperfect their attainments, whether in prosperity or adversity, whether in life or death. For all the work and trials of life there is a Saviour suitable and all-sufficient ever near, adapted to all the diversified cases of His people, mighty to save, full of compassion and tender mercy and unchangeable. All are welcomed to come to Christ, and, leaning on Him and trusting in Him, to enjoy this blessedness.

This is the *great end of all Divine ordinances*—this the saint's portion and reward in death and throughout eternity. The original term is most expressive: "O the blessednesses!" As if language was inadequate to declare how numerous, great, and excellent are the blessings which constitute the inheritance of the saints. The Bible throughout represents them as adapted to man's moral nature, and fitted to satisfy its largest desires. Believers enjoy throughout life the happiness of trusting in goodness infinite, in mercy and love unfathomable, and in power and faithfulness that are unchangeable and un-failing. Their latter end is peace, and death to them, come it when or how it may, is unspeakable gain. Their eternal state is the consummation and perfection of this blessedness. It is a crown, a kingdom, a great recom-

penso of reward. They are glorified together with Christ. Separated from all evil, and all their enemies destroyed, their's are fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure at God's right hand for evermore.

IN CONCLUSION.

Greatly should we desire to *realise the importance of this leading article of our father's testimony, and earnestly should we contend for it.* The royal Headship of the Redeemer is a fundamental truth, the most comprehensive—fitted, according as it is embraced and applied, to elevate and purify every relation in life, and to bless society. The banner which our fathers nobly unfurled, "For Christ's crown and covenant," is worthy to be grasped with firm hands, and displayed aloft against all opposition. It will one day assuredly triumph. Submitting ourselves to the sceptre of Prince Messiah, and kissing the Son ourselves, we should seek to bring others to submit to Him and obey Him. The true interest of nations and their rulers is to acknowledge the dominion of the Mediator. Abundant blessings they can only expect as they own His authority, and labour for the establishment of His kingdom. Soon as this great principle shall universally triumph, and men shall everywhere, in loving submission and holy obedience, kiss the Son, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness." "Men shall be blessed in Christ, and all nations shall call Him blessed."

Be concerned *lest you perish in or from the way.* "Why will ye die?" Is there any reason to satisfy you why you should perish? Your case, if you refuse to kiss the Son—to believe on Him, embrace Him, swear allegiance to Him, and obey Him—is desperate and hopeless. Remaining in such a state of ignorance, unbelief, and rebellion—whether you *are in* the way of a profession or *out of it*—you

must perish. While you continue thus, God will not save you. The remedy provided will not avail you, so long as you keep at a distance from Him on whom is laid all the sinner's help. He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. He is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Be exhorted, then, to flee now from the wrath to come. Throw away the weapons of your rebellion, and hasten to seek the peace and reconciliation that are through the blood of the cross. Make Christ Himself all your way to God and to heaven, and you cannot perish. The "wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err," and the "redeemed of the Lord walk there." Seek ever *the blessedness of them who trust in Zion's King*. Earnestly do we desire it for you. The Lord is their sure defence—their Rock and Refuge—their all-sufficient Help. He is their infallible Guide in life, their almighty support in death, and the fulfilment of all their hopes throughout eternity. The certain way of realising all this is child-like, constant trust in the Author of eternal salvation. "The Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts! blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12.) We close in the loving and weighty words of *Newton*—"My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you who once were as you now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every suppliant. Seek Him while He is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and He has said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." He is likewise the Author of that faith by which alone you can come rightly to Him. If you ask it of Him, He will give it you; if you seek it in the means of His

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appointment, you shall assuredly find. If you refuse this, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. If you are not saved by faith in His blood, you are lost for ever. 'O kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, if His wrath be kindled, yea, but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.' "

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST THE FRUIT OF HIS COMPLETED SUFFERINGS.

PSALM cx. 7—"He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up the head."

THE Saviour, when about to ascend to glory, declared that "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Him." (Luke xxiv. 44.) Much of ancient prediction had been accomplished concerning the Messiah promised, in His obedience and sufferings and death; much would yet be accomplished in His exaltation-glory, and His extensive mediatorial dominion. It is observable that some of the most sublime and expressive of David's psalms—such as the forty-fifth, the sixty-seventh, the seventy-second, and part of the one hundred and eighteenth—are full of the glory of Christ's Headship and universal authority and government. In none of the psalms are these more expressively declared than in this hundred and tenth psalm.

This brief but most significant and comprehensive ode is throughout an illustrious prophecy concerning the Saviour's mediatorial dignity—His kingdom and subjects, His Priesthood, sufferings, triumph, and subsequent glory. It has sometimes been styled "DAVID'S CREED." It contains a compend of the great articles of the believer's faith, on which depend the church's life, safety, and full establishment and glory. In the New Testament it is frequently quoted by our Lord Himself, and by His Apostles, and applied to His state of exaltation; and in proof of His eternal Godhead and mediatorial power, and of the subjection of all things to His royal dominion. In

the commencement of the psalm the Redeemer is seen enthroned at the Father's right hand, reigning till all enemies shall become His footstool. Then it is shown how this is effected, and a vivid view is presented of the Redeemer's powerful work on earth in saving His people and destroying their enemies. The Lord sends out the "rod of His strength"—the word accompanied by the energy of the Spirit. Then a people that are the Lord's become "willing in the day of His power." These come as "volunteers," or as "free-will offerings," in a day of muster, or of the manifestation of spiritual power. They appear "in the beauties of holiness"—numerous, vigorous, and refreshful, like dew from the womb of the morning. Thus all who are subdued to the sceptre of Christ are to Him a praise and glory in the earth. Then, as declaring how this illustrious work is effected, the Redeemer is exhibited invested with a royal priesthood. To Him it is said—"Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec." And because the possession of this high dignity by the Mediator is, whether as it concerns Jehovah's glory or man's salvation, a matter of transcendent importance, He is said to be made a priest with an oath, and the office to be "intransmissible" * and everlasting. He reigns invested with supreme power and authority, and can thus abundantly confer what He asks for His people as their Intercessor in heaven. As He carries into accomplishment His purpose of love, and gathers together a willing people, He executes vengeance upon enemies. All opposition to Messiah's universal dominion must be brought down—every power hostile to the church's salvation must be taken out of the way and destroyed. "He shall judge among the heathen; He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; He shall wound the heads over many countries." (Ver. 6.) This is the strange work of the enthroned Mediator in the earth—that which

* This is the proper rendering of the original epithet in Heb. vii. 24.

He ever performs, while He collects jewels for His crown, and as He extends and establishes His kingdom.

Then, in conclusion, in the brief but most comprehensive statement contained in the text, the way in which the Redeemer shall effect His high designs, and achieve His glorious victory, is emphatically declared. The foundation of His extensive dominion is laid in His embittered and continued sufferings. His exaltation and triumph are the reward guaranteed in covenant for His work of painful endurance and boundless merit. "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up the head."

We have each the deepest and most solemn personal interest in this momentous matter. Called as we are this day to commemorate the Saviour's sufferings and death, we should look upon Him whom we have pierced; and, considering the greatness and intensity of His soul-agony, we should rejoice in His exaltation-glory. Into these sublime mysteries holy angels ever desire to look. We, who are by nature fallen and miserable, have a far deeper interest in them than they. Taught by the Spirit, we may see in the sufferings of the Saviour our sins atoned for, our enemies conquered, all our trials unstinged, difficulties and dangers overcome, and death itself changed into a friend and rendered unspeakable gain. In His exaltation we may behold the certain pledge and assurance given us that we shall hereafter sit and reign with Christ, and shall share His victory and glory for ever. We shall consider—

I. THE SAVIOUR'S HUMILIATION AS EXHIBITED BY HIS DRINKING THE BROOK IN THE WAY.

The language of the text is figurative, but simple and deeply expressive. By evangelical expositors it has been generally understood to refer to the victories of the Captain of salvation over all His and His people's enemies. The "*brook*" has been taken to denote the blood of adversaries copiously poured forth as a stream to fill the way,

and the conqueror so drinking it as to refresh and satiate and delight himself in their destruction. Or, impelled by the eager desire of a warrior, he is represented as pursuing his conquests with such eager impetuosity that he only snatches the momentary refreshment presented in the way, and immediately lifting up his head, again he marches forward to final victory. The objection to this exposition is that it is only a repetition of what has been already said in relation to the Mediator judging among the heathen, wounding the head of enemies, and filling the places with their slaughtered carcases. The subject may be better regarded as a most vivid and significant representation of the Saviour's sufferings and exaltation, and of the sure and perfect salvation of His people. The "way" is all that through which the Redeemer had to pass in His incarnate state from earth to heaven. It is the service which He came to fulfil, with all the labours and trials which He had to undergo, till He should enter His glorious rest. The "brook" symbolized the affliction whose bitter waters He was called to drink till He fully exhausted them, and left none remaining. The "lifting up of the head" refers to His emerging out of His painful trials, and His exaltation to glory. There are therefore presented here, in the most condensed and expressive terms, the Saviour's wondrous abasement and His subsequent glory; and we have at the same time emphatically declared the connection of the one with the other. Let us, seeking the guidance of the Spirit, solemnly ponder these high mysteries of salvation. May we learn to mix faith with the hearing of the word, so as to have fellowship with the Saviour in His sufferings, and may rejoice in His exaltation and completed victory!

The "way" in which the Saviour drank of the brook is *the fulfilment of His Surety-undertaking* which lay between Him and glory. This was marked out in sovereign wisdom, in the stipulations of the covenant of redemption. He willingly became Surety, and engaged His heart to draw

near to God in behalf of fallen, apostate sinners. (Jer. xxx. 21.) He was "set up from everlasting," (Prov. viii. 23), in the full view of a life of suffering, and a death of ignominy under the curse. He undertook the sinner's desperate case. He came to do the Father's will. When He entered as a bond-servant on the work of lowly obedience, He said—"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (Mat. iii. 15.) Having voluntarily assumed the sinner's place in law, He was, all the time He was on earth, a *sin-bearer*, and was, in consequence, an *abased sufferer*. His earthly life was one of humble, sustained, sinless obedience. His whole way, at every step, was marked by sorrow and privation, and embittered trial. He had to pass through the wilderness, and through scenes of conflict, in the road to the heavenly crown. He came in close contact with diversified troubles, and was conversant with manifold and severe afflictions. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the shameful, accursed death of crucifixion. It "behooved Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory."

This way *was that of our salvation, and of all the obstacles that beset it.* Christ Jesus, in His whole undertaking and work of obedience, acted as a *public Person*. He voluntarily became our Surety in the covenant. The obedience which He offered was substitutionary; the troubles He encountered were for us. The redeemed had to travel through this world as a "great and terrible wilderness," on their way to the land of promise. We must pass through fire and water before we can reach "the wealthy place" in glory. Enemies of various kinds are to be encountered, and all sorts of interposing obstacles bar our entrance into rest. We are in continual danger of being overcome and destroyed. Of ourselves we never can pass over the swollen brook that runs in the way. The Captain of salvation required to be at our head to go before us and lead us on—to level and remove obstructions, to fight all our battles, to guide us so that we might not fear or turn

inside, and to bring us without fail to glory. (Isa. lv. 4; Heb. ii. 10.)

The brook in the way respects especially all the *indignities and trials* which the Redeemer encountered from the world, and endured from the powers of darkness. The imago is not, as our English term would seem to suggest, a streamlet failing in the drought of summer. Rather it refers to a swelling torrent—a river enlarged by abundant rain, or the melting snows—deep, impetuous, and overflowing. “My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away.” The indignities and trials from the world to which the Redeemer was exposed were manifold and severe. He was met everywhere with the world’s fierce and inveterate enmity. He was opposed by the wicked at every step, and in every part of His undertaking. He “endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself.” The “reproaches of them that reproach God” were cast upon Him. He was “despised and forsaken of men,” and “as one from whom was the hiding of faces.”* (Isa. liii. 3.) He was reviled and blasphemed. His own to whom He came received Him not. Jew and Gentile combined against Him in every part of His work on earth; He was exposed to the concentrated hostility of the world. The powers of darkness actuated their instruments—wicked men to circumvent and destroy Him. When He entered on His public ministry, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Though the adversary was foiled at the time, He forsook Him only “for a season.” During His life of spotless obedience, the prince of darkness made repeated onsets on the Captain of salvation; and His last sufferings were aggravated from His having to endure “the hour and power of darkness.” His whole life on earth was a scene of suffering and complicated sorrow. At every advancing step, He came in contact with some fresh brook—He needed to

* So may the original be more exactly rendered.

go into and pass through some overflowing and threatening torrent.

The brook running in the way was ominently *the wrath of God excited against Him on account of our sins*. This dread infliction met the Redeemer in every part of His way. He was "made a curse for us, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law." (Gal. iii. 13.) The wrath of God against the wicked is frequently likened to an impetuous torrent, which flows on till they are destroyed. "His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." (Job xxi. 20.) The wrath which the Substitute endured resembled the brook flowing near the temple, into which was cast all the refuse of the sacrifices; in which were collected, as it were, all filthy and accursed things. This the suffering Saviour was required to pass over. He had to drink to the dregs the overflowing cup of the Father's wrath which was put into His hands. He knew, as none other could possibly know, the full power of God's wrath. The floods came into His very soul. He "sunk in the mire, and came into the deep waters where there was no standing." (Ps. lxix. 2.) The Saviour had to endure the overflowings of wrath, in the way of entering into glory, for Himself and for His people. "It became Him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, to make the Captain of salvation perfect through sufferings." He had to meet, pass over, and remove out of the way this brook before He could receive His reward, or prepare the way for the entrance of the redeemed to glory. Among the Saviour's last words on the cross was the cry, "I thirst;" and it is recorded that His enemies, in fulfilment of ancient prediction, gave Him "gall to drink, for His thirst was great." On His way to Gethsemane, when His great agony began, He passed the brook *Kidron*—the name means *black*. He crossed in sorrow the black, noisome brook in the way,—emblematical this of the full torrent of wrath which He was shortly to meet and exhaust. The cup which the Father gave

Him to drink was filled with all bitter ingredients. The tremendous agony which Christ willingly endured was indispensably required that He might enter into His glory, and that we might be saved from wrath through Him. There could be no deliverance for us from avenging justice till our vast debt was fully paid: there could be no discharge of the Surety from sufferings, till the claims of the violated law had been completely satisfied.

The brook in the way was, finally, *an emblem of death in its most fearful terrors*. This was the penalty threatened to be exacted under the broken covenant. Death under the curse was the doom pronounced upon the transgressor.

“Dio he—or some abler must
For him sufficient ransom pay.”

The Saviour encountered death as “the King of terrors.” As going through the “swellings of Jordan,” He entered the impetuous overflowing waters. He parted and dried them up to the ground. He opened a secure passage for His redeemed, and provided that none of them should be carried down by the flood. The ark of the covenant uplifted has stood before these waters and divided them. Death has been conquered by the Leader of the Lord’s host; the sting has been extracted, and only the shadow now remains.* While multitudes that go into the river of death are cast away on the shores of a lost eternity, a safe and honourable passage has been prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There is no torrent of wrath now in the way between them and glory. To God’s people death is a calm, peaceful sleep. Christ Jesus has tasted

* “The drinking of the brook implies that the water is poured around, and flows into the mouth. Christ’s drinking the brook denotes the universality of the wrath which He endured. It entered within Him, for His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and it gathered all about Him. Encompassed by enemies on every side, and forsaken of the Father, He came into deep waters where the floods overflowed Him.” (Bishop Reynolds’ Works, vol. ii., p. 456.)

death for every one of the many sons that are to be brought home to glory. For them He died "the death of deaths," so that he who believeth on Him shall never die. "In the way of righteousness there is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death." (Prov. xii. 28.) In view of the Saviour's atoning death, the Christian may shout in triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.)

For the Saviour to drink so as fully to exhaust this brook of wrath and suffering, was, first of all, *indispensably needful*. "Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26.) The Saviour's sufferings were necessarily required from His Surety-engagement. The sins of His people, which He bore on His body on the tree, needed to be expiated by an atoning sacrifice. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." The curse must be rolled out of the way ere the redeemed could inherit the blessing. Christ Jesus alone was able to undertake the sinner's case; and having become Surety, it behoved Him to fulfil the engagement. His death under the curse was needful to obtain for the saved pardon, peace, and all blessing. Through His intense and complicated sufferings the curse is now rolled away, and the dread tokens of Divine wrath have disappeared for ever. A new and living way into the holiest of all, consecrated through the veil of the Redeemer's flesh, has been now made manifest.

He most *willingly entered into His course of suffering and death*. He was "straitened in spirit" till His bloody baptism was accomplished. In doing the Father's will He had intense delight, yet the doing of it called Him to endure the most bitter agony, and to most grievous suffering and sorrow. As He plunged into the swollen torrent to save the perishing, He endured the heavy pressure of the Father's wrath, and all its surging billows and waves passed over Him. Under the sinking of His humanity

He cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me;"—but as He knew it was morally impossible for Him to be exempted from suffering, He immediately withdrew the request and submitted Himself to the will of His Father—"but if not, not My will, but Thine be done." So did He drink and exhaust, in full resignation and desire, the cup of unparalleled suffering, that, like Samson, He was refreshed in spirit even in His deepest agony. (Jud. xv. 18, 19.) "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. xii. 2.)

With *fortitude and renewed strength* He *endured and triumphed in His sufferings*. Long before His advent it was predicted of the Saviour—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth." (Isa. xlii. 4.) This was fulfilled in His work of obedience and suffering, as it will be in the conflicts of His cause on the earth. He did not shrink nor recoil from aggravated afflictions. He hid not His face from shame and spitting. In the full confidence of faith, He entered the scene of dire conflict; and with heroic zeal and invincible fortitude, He stood the assaults of numerous and powerful enemies. "He put on the garments of vengeance, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." (Isa. lix. 17.) In the pangs of dissolution He uttered the loud shout of the conqueror. As He drank the last draught of the brook in the way He was refreshed, like the warrior in the hot pursuit of the enemy, grasping the victory fully achieved. The Saviour enjoyed Divine refreshment all along, in passing through diversified affliction. He rejoiced in spirit in times of deepest abasement; and a voice from the excellent glory once and again assured Him of covenant favour and acceptance with the Father. And when He was called to endure the cross, He was animated by "the joy set before Him" of the blessed results of His sufferings—in the Divine glory advanced, and millions of sinners saved for ever.

The brook in the way, as drank by the Redeemer, was

entirely and for ever exhausted. Made a curse for them, He redeemed His people from the curse. By His blood shed, He quenched for ever the flames of wrath. He bore the sins of the saved on His own body on the tree, and like the scapegoat of old, He bore them for ever away. All the afflictions of His saints He unstinged—the sources of their sorrows He dried up. Death is conquered, and swallowed up in victory. There is now no overflowing brook in the way of Zion's travellers. The billows of trouble are assuaged. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto Him." (Ps. xxxii. 6.) The storm, and tempest, and wrath have fully spent their fury upon the Man, Jehovah's fellow. Being in Him as a Hiding Place, no storms from heaven, earth, or hell can come nigh us. We pass through the river of death as on dry ground. At the Divine command and will the storm is hushed into a calm, the waves that once raged are still, and with joy we reach the desired haven.

II. HIS EXALTATION-GLORY.

"HE SHALL LIFT UP THE HEAD." The significant action indicates that the Sufferer, when His work is finished, has realised joyful relief from depression and dejection. The declaration presents the Saviour exhilarated in His sufferings, and conquering when He fell. The connection was immediate and most intimate. Even as a suffering Saviour, He was "anointed with the oil of gladness." Jehovah, the Father, was the "lifter up of His head, and His shield and glory." (Ps. iii. 3.) When drinking the embittered cup of wrath, He was sustained by the power of Godhead dwelling in Him, and by the help of the Father guaranteed to Him in covenant. The Son glorified the Father, and was Himself glorified by Him. The work that was given Him to do had its glorious completion in the last sufferings of the Redeemer. "Through death He destroyed Him that had the power of death." He annulled His authority for ever, and

"delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.)

In His *resurrection and exaltation to glory* He lifted up the head. As the Saviour expired on the cross He "bowed the head." His head was laid low in the sepulchre, and the body that sin never defiled slept in death. The descent into the grave of the crucified Saviour was not absolutely required for the completion of His Surety-undertaking. All was done that Divine justice demanded when He yielded up the ghost, and exclaimed with the shout of a conqueror, "It is finished." But that He might give the fullest attestation to the reality of His death, and to show His amazing condescension and love toward His people, He went down to the tomb, and prepared the grave of His saints as the perfumed chamber where the Lord lay. He rose again in calm majesty as death's victor. He was raised from the dead by the power of the Father. As the Debtor confined for His people's sins, the Creditor discharged Him, to attest that the vast debt had been fully paid, and that heaven was satisfied with the payment. He "rose again for our justification." His head, lifted above death and the grave, was crowned with glory: He was declared "to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection." (Rom. i. 4.) Most gloriously He ascended on high, "leading captivity captive." The grandest triumph was awarded the magnanimous Conqueror on His return from the hard-fought battle. Thousands of angels honoured the risen Saviour, and twenty thousand of the "chariots of God" swelled His train in His ascension to heaven. His chosen disciples were astonished onlookers, as the bright cloud received Him out of sight, when His hands were uplifted to bless them, and ere He had finished the blessing. What wondrous glory awaited the risen Redeemer as He passed beyond the clouds and sat down on His mediatorial throne in the heavens! He rose as "the first-fruits" of them that slept—the pledge and model of a future glorious harvest. In His session at the Father's right hand He is

Head of all principality and power—supremo over every name that is named in heaven or earth.

He lifts up His head in *exercising universal dominion*. As the reward of His meritorious obedience and sufferings He is exalted to universal power and authority. "The head of every man is Christ." (1 Cor. xi. 3.) He is given to be "Head of the heathen." Over all principality and power He presides with absolute control; and all things throughout the vast universe are placed in subjection under Him. He is the loving, life-giving, glorious Head of His ransomed church; and He exercises supreme dominion over all things for her benefit. (Eph. i. 22.) Over all hostile powers the Mediator sways an uncontrollable sceptre. Having conquered them by His death, He now restrains them by His power, and He will ultimately reduce them to prostrate subjection. "Then was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him." (Dan. vii. 14.) The crowned head of the Redeemer is thus displayed the highest and most glorious in the universe. His dominion, acquired by suffering and carried on by successive conquests, will subvert all that stands opposed to it; and, with glory ever increasing, will last till time shall end, and throughout the ages of eternity.

In the Saviour *coming at last to judgment* His head is gloriously lifted up. All judgment has been committed to the Son. God "has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 31.) "We must all appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body." (2 Cor. v. 10.) The final judgment is ominently designed to be the brightest manifestation of the sovereign authority of the Mediator, for clearing up the mysteries of providence, and gloriously displaying the grand principles of the Divine moral government. It is the "great day of the Lord"—the "day of the revelation of Jesus Christ." It is the last act of

His mediatorial dominion in this lower world. He shall then have delivered up the kingdom that was entrusted to Him, when He has put down all rule, authority, and power. This is the time of "the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour." How illustrious will then be seen the Saviour who was once despised and rejected of men! Every eye shall see Him, the church's exalted Head, the Lord of angels, the possessor of heaven and earth. The Babe of Bethlehem, as King of glory, now sits on the throne of universe. He who was judged and condemned at the bar of wicked man, will be the sovereign Judge of all. His tribunal is exalted above the loftiest thrones of all creatures in heaven and earth. From His judgment-seat there lies no appeal. When His saints, who have made a covenant by sacrifice, are gathered together to Him, the heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God is Judge Himself. (Ps. l. 5, 6.)

III.—THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SAVIOUR'S DEEP ABASEMENT AND HIS LOFTY EXALTATION.

This is briefly but emphatically stated in the word "Therefore." Because He drank of the brook, therefore has His head been lifted up. This is the frequent and most emphatic testimony of the Spirit. "For the suffering of death, Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour, and set Him over the works of thy hands." "He humbled Himself; therefore God also hath highly exalted Him." (Heb. ii. 6; Phil. ii. 6.)

This *connection was settled in the Divine purpose*, and was the reiterated subject of prophetic announcement. In the counsels of Trinity—in the stipulations of the eternal covenant—it was ordained that, through suffering and death, the Mediator should reach His throne of glory; that, by His atoning sacrifices, the ransomed of the Lord should share His high exaltation, and become heirs of His kingdom. Many bright predictions declare that it is in the

way of suffering and death that Christ and His people are exalted to dignity and glory. When the soul of Messiah is made an offering for sins, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands." (Isa. liii. 11.) "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isa. liii. 12.) The Saviour is given "a covenant of the people," as all its high stipulations meet in Him. He died under the curse, that He might ratify the covenant, and make its blessings sure to His seed. He was exalted, that He might enjoy the reward promised Him, and dispense all blessings to the heirs of salvation. The decree has "brought forth" in the person and work of the Mediator. Prophecy received its full accomplishment in the sufferings of Christ and His consequent glory. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

It is the *connection of merit and reward*. The Saviour's work of obedience and suffering was in every part meritorious. Through the union of the Divine and human in His person, all His actions had pertaining to them transcendent merit; and His sufferings were deserving of the highest recompense. He magnified the law and made it honourable. He glorified all the Divine perfections, and poured the flood of a high illustration over the principles of the Divine government. Therefore has He obtained the most glorious exaltation. He is crowned with glory and honour. His Head, on which flourish many crowns, is exalted to rule over angels of light, to be the centre of authority and praise of all the redeemed, and to have concentrated upon it the praises of eternity.

This glory is, finally, *seen in lifting up His people's head, and in their rejoicing for ever in Him*. It has been at times questioned whether it is the head of the conqueror that He lifts up, or that of the people for whom He engaged in con-

flict, and for whom He achieved the victory. The parallelism requires that it should be understood of the former; other passages of the psalms refer, in like terms, to deliverance effected for the latter. (Ps. iii. 3.) "Thou art my glory and the lifter up of mine head." (Ps. xxvii. 6.) "Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me." Both senses may well be included in the pregnant phrase in the text. The Saviour's exaltation, as the Head of His body, includes the blessed resurrection of all His members, and their sharing with Him in all His glory. "We are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 6.) The saints are made more than conquerors, and exalted to sit with the Redeemer upon His throne, as He has overcome, and is set down with His Father upon His Throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) Upright men shall have dominion in the morning. They share in all the victories of the Captain of salvation; and, raised from the dust, and triumphant over all enemies, they are ultimately made partakers of all the glory of His everlasting kingdom. The Divine purpose from eternity—the sure word of promise, the works of God in grace and providence—all look forward to this bright consummation. The saints made perfect, while they exult in the dignity and glory of their blessed Head, are like polished jewels set in His mediatorial crown, shining with effulgent splendour, and reflecting His glory for ever.

IN CONCLUSION.

This subject, first of all, calls us to *behold* and *admire* this *humbled* and *exalted* Saviour. It is His glory that shines forth in every part of the psalm. He is the Alpha and Omega of the church's creed. That He might accomplish the Divine purpose, and redeem lost sinners to God, He stooped very low, and endured fearful sufferings. He was the voluntary Substitute for the lost; and He willingly underwent all that was required for their recovery.

Inconceivable sorrows lay in the way of His completed undertaking and of His people's salvation, and these He willingly endured that He might bring glory to God through the work of human redemption. The object of all saving faith is here. We should behold this glorious Sufferer; we should contemplate the mystery of His unparalleled sufferings; and as we see Him emerging from the depths of His abasement, and His head encircled with glory and honour, we should devotedly love and admire Him. Believing on His name, we should regard Him as infinitely worthy of the highest adoration and praise. The crowns of glory are thrown prostrate at His feet; the harps of the ransomed in glory are perpetually vocal with His praise, and their palms are waved in His presence, ascribing to Him undivided praise and honour.

We see in this our *unspeakable need*, and are exhorted here to rest all *our confidence and hope*. An overflowing torrent of wrath lay between us and glory; the brook of afflictions of every kind ran in the way to the heavenly rest. This of ourselves we can neither avoid nor pass through. We are in constant and imminent danger of being overwhelmed by the billows, or of being swept away to a lost eternity. The mighty Captain of salvation has stood firm against these impetuous waters. He has passed through the brook of affliction and wrath; He has dried it to the ground, and fully exhausted it. He has assuaged the billows of wrath, and carried away the sting of death. We are called now to rejoice that God's wrath is appeased. We may contemplate the rising waves of trouble and the floods of death without dismay. The work of Christ has stilled these swollen waters, and has opened a safe passage for the redeemed. Death's Conqueror is now the sole Head of His people. For them He has ascended up on high. Lifted up, He draws them to Himself. (John xii. 32.) Attracted by a view of His suitableness and excellency, they have all ground to confide in His power, and to hope in His salvation. All their wants meet an adequate supply in His

fulness. All their trust and expectation should rest in His supreme authority and power to save.

Here is presented *the cardinal article of a faithful testimony for truth*. The universal mediatorial headship of the Redeemer is so comprehensive in its relations and so wide in its influence that it is pre-eminently worthy to be emblazoned on the standard displayed because of truth, and to be the matter of the church's faithful contending in all ages. The accomplishment of the covenant-purpose was made to rest on the Saviour's exaltation after suffering, and this is the high reward of His obedience to the death. He is constituted Head over all things to His church; "His head is as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy and black like a raven." (Song v. 11.) The Headship of Christ is of the highest practical value to the church, to the world, and to every individual. It has often been avouched before enemies in times of persecution and trial, and has been sealed by martyr-blood. It is ever worthy to occupy a commanding position in the church's testimony. It concerns us as individuals and societies to receive and embrace this great truth, and to contend for it earnestly as a chief article of the faith once delivered to the saints. Our whole life should be devoted practically to honour Him who is King of saints and Head of all principality and power. While we should delight to see the crown of our own salvation flourishing among the many crowns that adorn His head, we should labour and pray that all should bow to His sceptre, and willingly ascribe to Him all honour, and dominion, and praise.

Our chief preparation for the *sacramental feast*, as well as our *spiritual enjoyment in the banqueting house*, are derived from the precious declaration of the text. We are this day called to commemorate the sufferings and consequent glory of Christ. We are invited as the bidden guests to come to Him who willingly encountered the manifold obstacles that beset the path of His people's acceptance, and who removed them entirely out of the way. Our trust

for freedom from the curse, for victory over enemies, and for everlasting salvation, may repose securely here. We are encouraged to go in the strength of God the Lord. Where He leads, we may safely follow Him. As we behold Him in His dyed garments, "coming back from Edom and from Bozrah," "travelling in the greatness of His strength," we should rejoice in Him as "the Lord, mighty to save." Looking on Him as pierced by our sins, and wounded for our transgressions, we mourn in penitential sorrow. We are constrained to love Him, and to rejoice in Him as our over-living and glorious Head. We should exalt Him very high in our adoring praises, in personal dedication, and in devoted service. Our honour and bliss are to be with our blessed Head now; as to see His unveiled glory, and to be with Him for ever, will be the consummation of our heavenly felicity.

CHRISTIAN FAREWELL.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 11—"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

ON many grounds this last chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians is deserving of a diligent and attentive study. It contains the last affectionate counsels of the venerable Apostle to a church for which he had tenderly and anxiously cared; and it shows strikingly his godly jealousy over it. It manifests the spirit of a devoted minister, and what a church should constantly aim at, and the spirit by which it should be distinguished.

At verse fifth the members of the Corinthian church are directed to "examine themselves" lest they be self-deceived. This great duty is incumbent upon us, too, at all times, especially after the enjoyment of special holy ordinances. Our inquiry should chiefly be whether we are subjects of the real living faith of the Gospel. We are required to "examine," "prove," "know" ourselves. The number and variety of the terms by which the duty is enjoined ovince its transcendent importance, and indicate, too, the mode of its performance. We should betake ourselves to it with all serious concern. We are bid to "*prove* ourselves"—to test by experiment, and judge ourselves—by a frequent comparison of our hearts and lives with a perfect standard. The strength of the internal principle is manifested by external action. We give ourselves to do good, endure affliction patiently, and urge forward the great work of the world's conversion. The words of the command are repeated, and each succeeding term more strongly expressed than the preceding. Examine by a

close scrutiny—prove by applying a true touchstone of profession and character. “Know ye not your own selves,” intimating that this is a matter which it mainly concerns us to know, for which there are provided abundant means of acquaintance, and in which there is manifold danger of self-deception. The subject to be thus tested is awfully solemn and momentous. Christ is “in you,” dwelling as in a temple, the actuating power of all holiness of heart and life, “except ye be *disapproved and rejected*.”* Their apostacy and rejection will evidence that they were not of the eternal election of grace. The event fully discloses the original purpose.

The Apostle, after giving these solemn exhortations and affecting warnings, offers up in behalf of those whom he addresses fervent prayers. He prays God that they do no evil. He is less concerned about clearing up his own character, or vindicating his reputation against opposers and enemies, than that they should ever do what is honourable and becoming. The proof that the Apostle and his fellow-labourers were not disapproved and rejected, as men esteemed them, but that they were approved servants of God, is that they could “do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” So could the Apostles, as inspired teachers, declare; while all faithful ministers and true servants of Christ are characterised by labouring at all times for the advancement of the truth. In the spirit of Christian self-denial, we become willing to be abased, and to submit to infamy to promote the spiritual good of others; and the earnest desire of the heart seeks for them the highest measure of spiritual privilege and character. “This also we wish, *even your perfection*.” The object sought is their complete good order and full restoration to a perfect model of purity and moral excellence. The Apostle then, “after the sternness and sharpness of

* This is the proper meaning of the word employed in the original.

robuko," bursts forth in the largo, generous expression of a full, overflowing heart, "Finally, brethren, farewell," &c.

To us, at the close of a communion feast, these words are of solemn and very deep import. They may be to some of us, ministers, elders, or people, in reality a last farewell on earth. However this be—and we should not desire to lift up the veil and penetrate the future, which is wisely concealed from all flesh till the day of discovery—the counsels that follow are to every one of us of unspeakable importance. We should earnestly seek the Spirit, alike for the speaker, and for one another, that we all may receive them as God's special message addressed to us, and that henceforth we may know them in their sanctifying, saving power in our daily practice. We propose to consider—

I. THIS FINAL SALUTATION, AND THE PERFECTION ENJOINED.

The Apostle closes this epistle as he usually begins others, with friendly, loving salutation. After the fulness of instruction, exhortation, and warning which he had already given, he adds, as "to the remainder,"* an affectionate and expressive farewell. The comprehensive term is sometimes employed at the beginning of an inspired epistle in the sense of *greeting*. (James i. 1; Acts xv. 23.) Here it is to be taken as the utterance of a faithful minister and loving pastor, when, on completing a course of earnest instructions, his heart overflows with tenderness, and in the parting words he embodies his most fervent desires for the spiritual benefit of those whom he addressed.

This salutation is *expressive of earnest desire for their well-fare and happiness*. The different modes of salutation in different nations accord with the permanent features of

* The Greek has literally this meaning.

national character. Among the Hebrews the term used was "Peace," indicating the prime blessing promised to God's covenant people, and that which formed the sum and centre of their national felicity. With the Greeks it was "rejoice," corresponding to the lively, joyful disposition of a people situated amid the most exhilarating scenes of nature. Both these terms are appropriated, in the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, to express comprehensively the highest spiritual blessings. The word *farewell* expresses an earnest desire for welfare in the fullest sense. It commends to the soul the peace of reconciliation and friendship with God, and seeks for those to whom it is spoken the possession of the peace that surpasses all understanding. As does the venerable "Apostle of love," when uttering it, we place the prosperity of the soul as the highest attainment, and estimate the value of every other benefit according as it is realised. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 3.) This is emphatically the way of holiness, which conducts to life eternal. When we say a true farewell to others, we seek all that promotes their happiness in soul and body—in their outward estate and spiritual condition for time and eternity.

It calls to holy joy and rejoicing. This word of greeting is sometimes rendered—"Hail," or "all hail." It was used in mockery of Christ by enemies in His last sufferings, as it is employed in commanding and encouraging to be really joyful. Joy, as a spiritual emotion, always implies the possession of a loved and desired object. Thus we speak of the joy of victory achieved; of the joy of harvest, when the hopes of the husbandman are realised; and of the bridegroom rejoicing over the bride, in the consummation of the espousals. All the gracious work of the Comforter is accompanied with a measure of holy joy. When the sinner comes to Christ, believing on His name, and embracing Him as a Saviour, He "joys in God, through our Lord

Jesus Christ, receiving the reconciliation." * (Rom. v. 11.) Coming to Gospel ordinances, and realising Gospel privileges, we "draw water with joy from the wells of salvation." (Isa. xii. 2.) The grand duty and privilege of believers is to "rejoice evermore"—to "glory in tribulation," and with thanksgiving always to "triumph in Christ." God Himself is His people's joy—"the gladness and greatness of their joy." (Ps. xliii. 4.) The *grounds* of their spiritual rejoicing lie in the gracious relations He sustains to them, the work He has done for them, and the sure and blessed prospects which He has set before them. As "the God of hope," He fills them with joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope, according to the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 13.) He puts gladness into their hearts, transcending all that springs from creature enjoyments, and in conducting them to the fruition of Himself in glory. He leads them to "fulness of joy in His presence;" "there are pleasures at His right hand for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 10, 11.)

The salutation is followed by *special commands* that show the character of the happiness desired, and the way in which spiritual joy may be attained. We are bid to be "PERFECT," which is reached when every ground of discord is removed; all is found in its proper place and order, and everything is placed and done as it ought to be. The original word denotes to *repair, refit, recover* from decay or disaster, reclaim from error or sin. The thought is fully expressed when the Corinthian Christians are enjoined by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that they all speak the same thing, and "that there be no divisions among them; but that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. i. 10.) The command refers at once to the church, to the family, and to individuals. It requires that all that is out of joint be restored; and that in order to exhibit the comely order which the church should

* So the original word is better rendered.

over manifest, and to accomplish her high mission in the world, the heart should be "united." (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) The body, "fitly framed together," and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," maketh "increase to edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 16.) This is beautiful and attractive in the church and in social life. A place is for every one, and every one occupies willingly his assigned place. The beauty and perfection of the Christian profession is seen in every one recognising his position in the church; and in it seeking to act in harmony with others, and promoting to the utmost the common benefit of all.

The injunction points to the church addressed as "*knit together in love*," and constantly *aiming at perfection*. Those are said to be perfect in an evangelical sense who love one another with a pure heart fervently. The perfection required is to be sincere, entire, established in the faith. It is in some measure a present gracious attainment; and those who reach it are animated to persevere to the end, knowing that the reward that awaits them in glory is an abundant recompense for all work and warfare, for all loss and suffering. Noah was a "perfect man," and upright in his generation. A high degree of warm disinterested love is this perfection. This excels all earthly glory and honour. (Col. iii. 14.) It is above knowledge and pleasure, or the possession of earthly goods. The obligation rests upon us ever to aim at perfection. We may not attain to it here. None on earth, save the Lord Jesus Christ, ever reached full perfection. He alone is completely pure and holy. On us it is enjoined, as to Abraham—"Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1.) Our Lord commands us, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) We should neither be discouraged by the difficulties of the way, nor by repeated failures, nor by the consciousness of manifold imperfections of heart and life. Christian perfection is not gained by the simple act of believing, but through the renewed actings of faith, as it

is tried and tested, and in the way of holy diligence. We "go on to perfection," and only reach it at the end of the course. That which is "perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. xiii. 10.) We shall yet reach "the mark of the prize of our high calling." When the race is finished we shall be perfect in knowledge, holiness, and felicity. This high attainment we are required to keep perpetually in view. However weak our efforts and unsteady our pursuits, "that which concerns us the Lord will make perfect." His "mercy endures for ever; and He will not forsake the work of His hands." (Ps. cxxxviii. 8.) In a little time we shall be numbered with the "spirits of the just made perfect." Nothing shall be wanting to complete the measure of holiness and bliss that is reserved for the righteous. What is the certain end of our faith and hope is worthy to be the continual object of our fervent desire and constant pursuit.

II. THE SPECIAL COMFORT AND ONENESS OF HEART AND MIND ENJOINED.

The command to "be of good comfort" is significant and strongly expressive. The same word in the original means *to comfort* and *to exhort*. As used by the penmen of the New Testament, it implies that the consolation which the Divine Paraclete gives is always in the way of instruction or exhortation. The injunction also may mean to impart consolation to others as well as to enjoy it ourselves.

This comfort is *the consolation which the Holy Spirit imparts*. He is the promised Comforter—the Divine Agent in conferring spiritual refreshment and gladness. He dwells in the hearts of believers, as in a living temple, and is within them "a well of water springing up to life everlasting." His is almighty power to dispel all that causes grief and sorrow, and to subdue all enemies. He has all condescending grace and love to "sit and comfort the mourners." He is "the God of all consolation." The

"fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." All His saving operations in convincing, instructing, enlightening, and sanctifying are consolatory. We cannot fail to "be of good comfort" when we live and walk in the Spirit—when we cherish His motions, and diffuse around us the fragrance of His grace.

Those are of good comfort who are consoled by the promises and discoveries of the Gospel, and are elevated by its blessed hopes. The whole Gospel of salvation is a message of peace, and is the grand instrument of imparting all substantial spiritual comfort. It proclaims and imparts pardon to the guilty, deliverance to the oppressed, health to the infirm and diseased, and joy to the disconsolate. It "appoints unto them that mourn in Zion, and gives unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isa. lxi. 3.) The Gospel reveals Christ, the covenant of peace, a finished salvation, and a glorious heaven prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. It makes clear our personal interest in the great salvation, and imparts to the soul the hopes which it declares. It is the "joy-inspiring sound," and they are truly blessed who know it. The promises of the Gospel are the declaration of God's gracious purposes. As given to us, they are "exceeding great and precious." Contained in the covenant ratified by atoning blood, they are *absolute and unconditional*, and are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Any Divine promise spoken to the heart imparts strong consolation. A part of the rich "feast made unto all people" in the mountain of the Lord's house is the assurance that death will be swallowed up in victory, and that "the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces." (Isa. xxv. 6.) The hopes which the Gospel inspires are bright, substantial, and sure. Christ is within His people the hope of glory. Their hope rests as "an anchor within the veil, sure and steadfast." Saved by hope now, in a short time all their expectations of blessing will be fully realised. The "grace which

brings salvation" effectually teaches them to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," while they look "for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour." (Titus ii. 11-13.)

This *comfort is all from Christ*—the "Son of consolation." There is much and strong consolation in Christ, (Phil. ii. 1); in His Person, His love from eternity, His Surety-undertaking, His work on earth, His offices, and in all the gracious relations which He sustains to His people. He is the source of all their joys—the full and inexhaustible fountain of all their felicity. This fountain is ever open and always accessible. Jesus "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Having Him, we have with Him all things; and can rejoice in tribulation, and, even amid sorrow and darkness, abound in spiritual consolation. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will with Him freely give us all things." (Rom. viii. 31, 32.)

Ourselves of good comfort, we are called to *admonish, exhort, and comfort one another*. The precept may be taken in a reciprocal sense—"to impart consolation to others." "Be yourselves spiritual comforters." Such is the frequent command of the Spirit addressed to the children of God—"Exhort one another daily." (Heb. iii. 13.) "Comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. iv. 13.) This mutual consolation is the fruit of the Spirit's indwelling and powerful operation, and results from the feeling of brotherhood among the members of the redeemed family. Themselves filled with the spirit of light and love, they cannot but give utterance to the deep thoughts and emotions of the heart; and, "as members one of another," they must edify each other in love, speak comfort to mourners, animate fellow-labourers in work and conflict, and seek to inspire them with joyful hope. This mutual exhortation and comfort forms a chief part of the communion of saints, and is essential to the increase and efficiency of the church

of Christ. When the Spirit is poured out as water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, they spring up in luxuriant growth, "as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses." "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." (Micah v. 7.)

The injunction, "*Be of one mind*," is full and emphatic, declaring the Apostle's earnest concern for the churches to which he wrote. Thus he exhorts the Christians in Rome to be "of the same mind one toward another." (Rom. xii. 16.) And again he prays for them that "the God of patience and comfort would grant them to be of the same mind one toward another, according to Christ Jesus." (Rom. xv. 5.) The command calls Christians to put away all anger and malice and alienation of affection, as being wholly unbecoming their character and profession. These are works of the flesh, which are to be mortified and put away resolutely and at once. Instead of bitterness, wrath, anger, and malice, they are required to be "kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them." (Eph. iv. 31, 32.) They are to be distinguished by *unity of judgment* on matters of doctrine and practice. Like the primitive Christians, they should be "of the same mind in the Lord," (Phil. iv. 2); to "mind the same thing, and walk by the same rule;" that they may "be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Phil. ii. 2.) They are to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel." (Phil. i. 27.) With one infallible directory, and under the teaching of the same Spirit of truth, there is ample provision made for Christians coming to the same views on the great doctrines and duties of religion. The understanding spiritually enlightened cannot but entertain oneness of sentiment on the great matters of sin and salvation. As the church advances in the knowledge of revealed truth, and the Spirit is more

copiously poured out, the attainment which our Covenanting fathers earnestly sought—a “*blessed uniformity*” of principle and practice—will be reached. Diversity of views on fundamental doctrines cannot be accordant with the will of the Author of inspiration. Submission to the supreme authority of the word will cause the same things to be believed, and the same course of conduct to be followed. The promise for a period of enlargement and blessing is—“I will give them a heart to know Me. I will give them one heart and one way.” (Jer. xxxii. 39.) As far as we have “the mind of Christ,” we are one with Him in judgment on the truths revealed, as we are actuated by His Spirit in a godly practice. The unity which is enjoined in being of one mind lies chiefly in three things—1. *In faith in the doctrines* which are the glory of revelation—“There is one faith.” 2. *In Christian duty*—“According to all that the Lord has commanded,” so do we. 3. *In Christian experience*. We seek to know the power of the truth renewing and elevating the heart, and purifying and transforming the life and conduct. The command requires us to be spiritual and experimental. We should be exercised about the great problems of the being, perfections, and moral government of God. We should labour after clearer views of man’s state and future destiny, as we should aim to be of one mind respecting the power and authority of the Redeemer, and the establishment of His kingdom in the earth. As members of one family, united in heart and spirit, and as persons bound together by mutual vows, and engaged in this common pursuit of great importance, we should be of the same mind. Our assured hope is, that the day will yet come when divisions and parties will cease, and a blessed unity in sentiment and feeling in the church shall universally prevail. “There shall be one Lord, and His name one.” Israel and Judah shall be “one stick” in the hand of the Healer. With “the faith” universally diffused and triumphant, and the Spirit plentifully poured out, there shall be one bright light in principle

and practice, shining resplendent throughout the world. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isa. xl. 5.)

III. THE PEACE TO BE CONSTANTLY CULTIVATED.

This is the highest attainment which we are required to press after. It indicates a fixed state of mind and conduct; a habit of life and deportment by which we should always be characterised.

This is *peace with God and our own consciences*. We are by nature estranged from God—the heart at enmity with Him, and He our almighty foe. In the day of effectual calling we are reconciled to God by the blood of His Son. The enmity of the heart is slain, and we are received into a state of friendship with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isa. xxxii. 17.) The blood of Christ sprinkled by the Spirit gives internal tranquillity of mind. The conscience is purified and made tender. As we become more holy, disturbing and distracting elements are removed, and the "peace that passeth understanding" keeps as a garrison the heart and mind. (Phil. iv. 7.) This peace with God and with ourselves is at once our highest privilege and our great duty. While it is conferred by the grace of the covenant, we are under the strongest obligation to seek after its attainment, and to live in its conscious possession.

This is *peace with one another and with all men*. Those who are of the household of faith are united in firmest concord. The common truth which they profess is a bond of union; the Spirit that dwells in them ever disposes them to watch against all that would mar their unity; and the holy exercises in which they have fellowship serve to knit their hearts together. The ordinances of religion on

which they are called to attend are "to the house of Jacob joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore they love the truth and peace." (Zech. viii. 19.) The Gospel proclaims peace on earth and good-will to men. Believers, themselves reconciled to God, are of a peace-loving spirit. They seek the blessing that pertains to the peace-makers. In a hostile world they follow peace with all men, and, as much as possible, live peaceably with all men. In the prevalence and triumph of the Spirit and principles of the Gospel, wars and enmities shall cease to the ends of the earth. The kingdom of peace and righteousness shall be universally established. The King coming to Zion "shall speak peace unto the heathen; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." (Zech. ix. 10.) "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." (Ps. lxxii. 3.)

The peace in which we are to live is seen in its *nature, foundation, obligation, and manifestations*. It is assimilated to the tranquillity of the Divine mind. Christ is "our peace," and we "live in peace," as we are one with Him. United to Him by the indwelling Spirit, and by faith, we become the children of peace. We are transformed by the renewal of our minds, and have "the mind of Christ in us." The firm foundation of this peace is the everlasting covenant. The blood of Christ which ratifies it is the grand way of reconciliation between heaven and earth. It is ever *peace-speaking*—pleading in God's ear for pardon, and speaking to the sinner's conscience assurances of favour and acceptance. Revealed truth—the truth as it is in Jesus—is the sure basis of concord in the churches and throughout society. This peace of all sorts—spiritual in its nature and blessed in its results—is to be displayed in its appropriate manifestations. We are to "live" in it, as in our element. The fundamental principle of the Christian life is here. With all life in Christ and from Him, we are to show it everywhere—in our spirit, words, and actions.

Ourselves enjoying peace with God, and having the answer of a good conscience, we are to depart from evil, and do good—to “seek peace and ensue it.” Our efforts and influence should be rendered that schisms be healed, divisions may cease, and true concord and love universally prevail. The brightest manifestations of this spirit and blessing are often made at the end—“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.” (Ps. xxxvii. 37.) “The Lord will give strength unto His people. The Lord will bless His people with peace.” (Ps. xxix. 11.)

IV. THE ASSURED PROMISE AND BLESSING.

“*And the God of love and peace shall be with you.*” This is a very precious assurance. Every word is emphatic and significant. Whoever may forsake you, whatever trials are to be encountered, whatever changes to take place, God—the God of all love and grace—will not leave nor forsake. His gracious presence will be a constant shade for protection and refreshment. His blessing will be a full compensation for all trial and suffering. Consider—

The glory and excellence of the title. He is revealed as the God of love in framing the covenant of peace. This is the source of human redemption—the fountain of all blessings to the redeemed. He is the glorious Author and Pattern of love and peace. Should we not ever come to Him, and admire and delight in Him as the God of love and peace? This title supplies an argument in prayer for obtaining the blessings needed and sought. As when the object of worship is styled, “the God of all grace,” “the God of hope,” it denotes that He is the source of these graces, and is over ready to confer them. So He is designated “the God of love and peace,” that His people may be encouraged to expect the abundance of love and peace from Him.

He will be ever with you to bless you. The name by which He is called is *Immanuel*—God with us. He

cannot deny Himself, and His glory He will not give to another. He is with His people by His Spirit dwelling in their hearts—the Substitute for the presence of a personal Saviour—making all gracious discoveries, and exciting all gracious affections. He is the “Comforter”—the immediate agent of love and peace in the heart—given to abide with His people for ever. He is in the church as the “seven lamps of fire” that burn perpetually before the throne; and He descends copiously as rain on dry ground, and floods upon the thirsty. “My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.” (Eph. ii. 5.)

He will be with them by *His special gracious providences*. Like the pillar of cloud and fire that accompanied Israel in their desert-march, He is with them while they walk in the way of holy obedience, to guide them in the way, be their protection, their covert for refreshment, the way of assured victory over all enemies, and of entrance into the heavenly rest.

His gracious presence and blessing *is only thus abundantly enjoyed*. As His people aim to be perfect, abound in spiritual consolation, and comfort one another; as they are united in mind and heart, and as they live in peace, He is with them, and reveals Himself to them as the God of love and peace. He dwells with them here, as they abide in Him perpetually. “If a man love Me he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come in to him, and make our abode with him.” (John xiv. 23.) We need not expect His gracious presence in a scene of contention and strife. But when the God of peace and love condescends to dwell in the hearts of His obedient children, He makes the place of His feet glorious. The families of the righteous where He dwells become the abodes of joy and melody; and the ordinances of the church become “trysting-places” with the Beloved—the “galleries” where the King is held—“the mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense.”

He will show them *His full salvation in bringing them to*

glory. The God of love and peace comes to dwell with them now, that they may be with Him in glory for ever. The Captain of salvation leads all those whom He makes sons to heaven. He guides them through the wilderness, going before them, and at length fulfils to them His precious promise—"I will come and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 3.) They are brought to the palace of the King, and to His glorious presence, there to abide. They are received to "the many mansions" in the Father's house, where they go no more out. The Lord God dwells among them as their "overlasting light." His servants see His face, and His name is in their foreheads. "So will we be for ever with the Lord."

IN CONCLUSION.

Let us seek to *realise the blessing of the salutation* for ourselves, while we fervently desire that it may be enjoyed by others. The spiritual welfare, which consists in peace with God, and in the exercise and growth of grace in the soul, is provided for us in the Gospel, and we are certainly bid welcome to its enjoyment. If we would cordially desire blessings for others, we must know their value for ourselves. Let us seek to be filled with the Spirit, that we may be instrumental in diffusing around the savour of the name of Christ. When we salute others with a hearty farewell, we should be able to recommend to them the rich benefits of salvation by our own sweet experience, and to say as the Apostle, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ." We should aim ourselves, in the fullest sense, to fare well, and to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect." We should seek to enjoy a sense of reconciliation with God, to rejoice in His face and favour, and to go on to spiritual perfection, if we would, by our prayers or example, be the means of imparting to others the same blessings. When we ourselves draw largely out of the fulness of Christ, and walk in the

Spirit, we will be impelled to seek earnestly and always the spiritual welfare of others; and our influence will be powerful in leading them to go on to perfection. What we urge others to do in religion we are under paramount obligation ourselves to do, while our concern for the spiritual advancement of brethren will have a reciprocal influence upon our own spirit and conduct. He that watereth others will himself be watered. By mutual exhortation in the spirit of fervent prayer, we enjoy the communion of saints, and realise enlarged blessing. "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." (Hosea vi. 1, 3.)

Christians should ever, in the spirit of faith and love, seek that *others should rejoice in the Lord and be perfect*. This should be the object of all their teaching from the word, and of all their efforts for the spiritual good of mankind. To this end they should make known the Gospel of the grace of God; for this they should always pray; and, by the attractive power of a living example, they should labour to draw others with them on to perfection. Studying themselves to walk circumspectly, and to exhibit the comely order of the house of God, and the beauty of holiness, they should seek to bring men everywhere to the full knowledge of the truth, and to advance them to "the stature of perfect men in Christ." We are called to "shine as lights in the world," and to let "our light shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven." (Phil. ii. 15; Matt. v. 16.) By our whole spirit—by our every word and action—we should encourage fellow-men to be of good comfort, and to rejoice in the Lord alway. We should aid them in all possible ways to advance to perfection, and should beware of doing aught to retard or discourage

them. As Christians we cannot live to ourselves. In quickening, comforting, and establishing others in holiness, our own spiritual life and comfort will be promoted; while the glory of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light will be more illustriously displayed.

The great *Agent of all consolation and unity and of a life of peace is the blessed Spirit*. His presence and power we should constantly seek, as we should cherish His influence. He is the Comforter—the grand promise and gift of the ascended Saviour, sent for the most salutary and important purposes—to glorify Christ; to take the things which are His, and reveal them; to sanctify and seal believers till the day of redemption, and to be in them the earnest of glory. He is the author of all comfort and joy in the fellowship of the church. Through His agency the hearts of the faithful are knit together in love; and the Redeemer's last prayer is fully accomplished—"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." (John xvii. 21.) The Spirit, too, is the Author of all spiritual peace in the hearts of the redeemed, and of substantial concord in the church. How earnestly and perseveringly should we plead for the fulfilment of the grand promise of the last times—the plentiful effusion of the Spirit! How much should we seek to follow the leading of this blessed Guide, that we may know the full blessing of holy obedience! "O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!" (Isa. xlviii. 18.)

Finally, *our great interest and privilege is to claim the promised blessing, and to live ever as enjoying it*. "The God of love and peace shall be with you." His gracious powerful presence will be to us effective of all good, and will render the fellowship of the church unspeakably comfortable and blissful. We "walk in love"—in the

realised presence of the God of love. We cannot but possess internal peace, and follow peace with all men, when the God of peace dwells among us. His gracious presence is our defence against all evils—our all-sufficient help in all work and conflict; and, over hosts of enemies, our joyful hope and assured victory. The God of love and peace with us will sanctify and sweeten every relation in life, unsting every trial, lighten all our labour, and make our work yield pleasant and abiding fruits that will redound to His honour. Here, indeed, is all our real happiness in life, our peace and triumph in death, and our blessedness throughout eternity. In life, however engaged or tried, we “walk with God;” and in death “we are not, for God has taken us.” Realising this exalted privilege, we may individually cherish the Apostle’s sure confidence and assurance as our life-motto—our fixed purpose and hope—*“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to have died is gain.”* (Phil. i. 20, 21.) Whether we shall ever assemble together again on earth at the close of a communion feast, or this is to be our last meeting in the banqueting-house, let us, with the whole heart, in parting, animate and comfort one another with these words—*“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”*

THE BELIEVER'S SONSHIP AND RESEMBLANCE TO CHRIST AT HIS FUTURE APPEARANCE.

1 JOHN iii. 2—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

AT the close of the preceding chapter the Apostle declares that those who do righteousness are "born of God." In the opening of this, he bursts out into lofty adoring views of the love of the eternal Father in having conferred upon them the unspeakable honour of being "*called*" or *made* His children.* "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." We may ever stand still and wonder as we inquire—"What manner of love is this?" In *kind*, how tender and condescending, in adopting us into God's family; in *degree*, how exalted and ennobling, to make us partakers of all its privileges! What thought can comprehend it, or words describe it! When we consider God's purity, justice, and glorious majesty, and our meanness, guilt, pollution, and misery; when we reflect on the blessings conferred, and the wondrous method in which they are bestowed, the love of the Father displayed in all this must ever appear incomprehensible and passing knowledge—the theme of perpetual admiration and praise. Therefore is it that "the world"—the unregenerate lying out of Christ—knows not the object of this love, "even as it know Him not." When the only-begotten of the Father appeared on earth, the world despised, rejected, and

* One of the ancient versions—the Vulgate, reads the first verse—"That we should be called sons of God—and we are so."

crucified Him. The like treatment may the children of God always expect from the world, from which they are separated, and whose deeds they condemn as evil. Their principles are misunderstood and misrepresented—the sources of their support and comforts are unknown—their conduct is condemned and covered with reproach. Yet this, despite of an evil world, becomes matter of holy rejoicing to believers in Christ, as attesting their separation from the ungodly, and their spiritual sonship. Justly may we conclude with a pious critic,* “Wherefore, if they who disregard God hold thee in high esteem, thou hast good reason to be anxious as to thy condition.” Rising above the world’s opposition and contempt, believers, exulting in their high and distinguishing privileges, declare in the pregnant expression of the text—“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” This is the record of Christian consciousness, declaring a filial relation to God, and a fraternal relation to men; and, at the same time, a firm and joyful assertion of Christian life. Fellow-believers are addressed in terms of the most endeared affection—Beloved they are of God, and therefore greatly loved by one another. “*Now*,” in contrast to “not yet” which follows, we have this high rank and dignity. We are conscious of it, and amidst present imperfection and darkness, it fills us with joyful and animating hopes. The day will soon dawn, and at Christ’s glorious appearance, clouds and darkness will be completely dispelled. There will then be perfect knowledge of the Lord, and perfect assimilation to Him in holiness, glory, and felicity. For the present, while the event and issue on which faith rests are certain, there is yet obscurity overhanging the future, and hindering a clear view of the glory hereafter to be revealed. The *time* is unknown—the *manner* is in part concealed. Yet, in the beautiful expressive words of the text, a revelation is made of the era and mode of realising all this glory

* Bengel.

and blessedness. The end and evidence of faith in the unseen—the fulfilment of all spiritual hope—are concentrated in the Saviour's second coming. "When He shall appear, we shall then be like Him." Complete transformation in soul and body, and with it, enjoyment of perfect and unending felicity, will be effected in seeing Him as He is. Herein lies the strongest motive and most animating encouragement to the constant pursuit of universal holiness—"Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as He is pure." May the Spirit of all grace and truth enable us to realise now this as our assured belief, and to cherish this as our well-grounded hope! We propose to

I. Consider the condition and dignity of believers.

II. The present imperfection of our knowledge of the future.

III. The clearness attained in Christ's appearance, and our likeness to Him.

I. THE CONDITION AND DIGNITY OF BELIEVERS.

Before it is said—as the fruit of Divine sovereign love—"that we should be called the sons, or *children*, of God." To *call* with God is to make what the title imports. As Abraham and Jacob had, through special favour, their names changed and God's name put upon them, so believers, in the renovation of their natures, become the sons and daughters of the Lord almighty. By the new spiritual birth, and by the act of adoption, we enjoy new privileges of unspeakable value, and in the future state, privileges of a still higher order await us. We have the conscious sense of the one now, and the assured hope of the other amounts to special knowledge. With full confidence we look forward to the manifestation of our sonship in the great day of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We are now the children of God as we are *numbered in God's family*. There are still, as there have ever been, but two families on earth—that of the evil one, and that of

God. "Ye are of your father the devil, and his works ye will do," said Christ of His personal enemies, as it may be still declared of the enemies of His cause and people. Redeemed out of the world, and separated from it, we are taken into God's family. Born again by the Spirit, we become new creatures, and all "old things become new." Gathered out of the world, and adopted as sons, we henceforth belong to the household of God. Of this Divine family the first Person of the Trinity is the Father and Head. Christ Jesus is the Elder Brother; holy elect angels are members; and all saints, the redeemed in heaven and earth, and those who are yet to be called, are the younger children. This whole family is named after Christ (Eph. iii. 15), as He is the source and centre of all its privileges, and with Him they share their enjoyment. How blessed the relation implied in the declaration, "Now are we the sons of God!"

We are children of God by *sovereign, efficacious grace and by faith*. From eternity we were "predestined to the adoption of sons." God sent forth His Son "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 5.) In the "day of power" He puts us "among the children." (Jer. iii. 19.) The Gospel call is: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) The Holy Spirit renders this call effectual. He gives faith, and the saved have power—the right and authority "to become the sons of God, believing on His name." (John i. 12.) Adoption is altogether of sovereign grace; so is the faith which receives the blessing promised, and which appropriates and relies on Christ alone for salvation. The Spirit breathes upon the dry bones, and they live. The children of God are born of the Spirit. By the actings of a living faith we call God our Father, and do not turn away from Him. (Jer. iii. 19.) As we return to Him, and He heals

our backslidings, we say from the heart, "Behold, we come unto Thee; for Thou art the Lord our God." (Jer. iii. 22.)

We have the *nature* and *spirit* of children. A new heart is given and a new nature implanted. The overcomers receive "a white stone"—the emblem of their justification—"and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Rev. ii. 17.) This is the name and nature of a child of God, which is wholly unknown to any who are not the subjects of saving grace, and who are not adopted into God's family. God "sends forth the Spirit of His Son into the heart." (Gal. iv. 3.) We receive "not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) This is not strictly the Holy Spirit as a personal agent, but the effect of His indwelling—the graces which He implants and stirs up into lively exercise. It is the Spirit of light and love, of dependence, of meekness, patience, and gentleness. It is eminently the "spirit of grace and supplication," for by it we cry, importunately and perseveringly, "Abba, Father." All heart-felt trust and expectation are here. We are converted, and become as little children. Our chief argument to prevail in prayer is this. We come unto God, as children to a Father, able and ready to help, and He receives and pities us, and bestows upon us the good gifts of His promise and salvation.

We share the *Father's* *loving care*, and, as heirs of God, have even now *all the privileges of children*. The sons of God were chosen and adopted in love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) The "love which the Father hath bestowed upon us" is great—wholly gratuitous and unchangeable. The love which the Saviour has to the redeemed is love to the end; or rather it is love which had no beginning and will know no end. It is manifested in tender pity and compassion, in the amazing sacrifice made for objects undeserving and guilty,

and in the rich gifts conferred upon them, and in all that is done on their behalf. He "rests in His love" towards them. He "joys over them with singing." (Zeph. iii. 17.) "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.) In the scheme of redemption, heirship constantly follows sonship, and is inseparable from it. Believers, on their adoption, become "heirs of the promise" of "salvation," of "the world," of heaven. Theirs is the "inheritance of saints in light." They are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." The extent and riches of this inheritance cannot be fully conceived or enumerated. It comprehends an interest in the Father's love. He protects and corrects them, and provides for them; gives His angels to guard them, His Spirit to guide them, and brings them without fail to the possession of His everlasting kingdom. For this they have a sure and indefensible title. Through the work of the Spirit in sanctification, they obtain meetness for its full enjoyment, and in due time they shall be put into its indisputed and ennobling possession. Believers are, to the whole extent of all this dignity and of these privileges, the sons of God "*now*." Whenever they are adopted, all are "theirs," and "they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." They have the nature, title, and spirit of sons. Their present right to all blessed privileges is guaranteed in the covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure." Of this they are assured, and can say in truth, "*Now*," and not hereafter, "are we the sons of God."

How, it may be asked, may we thus strongly and truthfully assert our sonship? Chiefly in *three respects*, may we, without presumption, make the solemn declaration—

1. *From the testimony of the word.* The promise—"I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters," accompanies the command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) When we receive Christ, and believe on His name, we obtain "power to become the sons of God." (John i. 12.) We are

"put among the children," when we say, in the language of appropriation, "My Father." (Jer. iii. 19.) Faith, receiving Christ and resting on Him, is self-evidencing. The act for the time excludes questioning or doubting. We have boldness to come in the full assurance of faith into the immediate Divine presence. (Heb. x. 22.)

2. Through *the leading and witness of the Spirit*. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.) The Spirit's work in glorifying Christ, and showing to believers the things that are His, consists greatly in gracious guidance. By supernatural influence He draws to Christ lifted up. He does not forcibly drive, but gently leads, and we follow Him. He leads to prayer, to holy ordinances, to fellowship with saints, to God and to heaven. He reveals the truth, and fills with joy and peace in believing. In all these cases, our wills are inclined, our affections elevated, and with hearts enlarged, we run the way of God's precepts. The Spirit "witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God." He begins "a good work" in the soul; and by raising and giving a new direction to the natural powers of the mind, He brings out the witness of our own spirit to our sonship. As a Divine Agent dwelling within, He has immediate access to the sanctified heart, and can at any time give a powerful confirming testimony that we are the children of God, and heirs according to the promise. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." When the "Comforter is come, He shall testify of me," and "ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (1 John v. 10; John xvi. 26, 27.)

3. Our *conduct, and the Father's dealings with us*, show that we are now the sons of God. He calls us *sons* and *not servants*, because He hath made known to us all things that He heard of the Father. (John xv. 15.) "Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." We serve Him as a son his father, with devoted affection and a high regard to His honour. As we approach His

throne of grace, we constantly cry, "Thou art my Father; my God alone, and the Rock of my salvation." (Ps. lxxxix. 26.) The Father's dealings with His adopted children are all in love and pity—in sovereign wisdom and grace. His chastisements are the discipline of the covenant; and are certain tokens of sonship and paternal love. He makes known His name to His brethren; and with joy and delight He presents them to the Father, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." He sets His name upon their foreheads; and even their imperfections and falls do not change His relation towards them, or disinherit them. They are the "spots" of His children, which in due time will fully disappear. So is it all along. They aim to walk before Him to all well-pleasing; and He guides them by His counsel, works all their works in them, and delights to honour and bless them. Assurance of our sonship can only be found in the way of holy obedience, and of bringing forth much fruit. Without this, the claim is presumption and a delusion.

II. PRESENT IMPERFECTION OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE.

"*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*" The original words are singularly expressive. "It hath not yet been manifested;" or, "we do not yet manifestly know." The full future of our condition is yet obscure. Imperfection and darkness in part remains. It is not clear what we shall be. Though we are now the sons of God, our manifestation to the world and the clearness of it to ourselves have not yet taken place, yet our hope is firm and steadfast. We know *with well-assured knowledge* * that if He be manifested, or "when He shall appear," we "shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." The phrase, "we know not what we shall be," may be regarded in a twofold

* This is the force of the original Greek.

aspect :—1. *As the entrance of the disembodied spirit to glory.* The change that takes place at death is a mystery, and until it is actually experienced must remain incomprehensible. The time of dying is a solemn and awful moment. The transition of a human spirit from time to eternity is of the most absorbing interest and importance. We know that the soul in dying is conscious, and that death is not the sleep of the spirit. We have the clearest testimony that when absent from the body the ransomed spirit is immediately present with the Lord; and that “to depart and be with Christ” is “far better” than the highest condition of spiritual enjoyment here. Yet is there much pertaining to the soul’s state when disembodied that we cannot now clearly understand. The place of its abode, the manner of its future existence, its mode of thought and feeling, and the way in which it has communion with God and intercourse with saints and holy angels in the world of spirits, must continue obscure, till the shadows of time are gone, and we have been fully introduced to the glorious realities of eternity. 2. *The resurrection of the saints, and their glorified state in eternity.* Of the blessed resurrection of the righteous we are fully assured in the Gospel; and their faith and hope have the strongest confirmation in the resurrection of Christ—the Head of His body, as the first-fruits and model of the resurrection of the righteous. We know that with the same bodies as were dissolved at death the saints will be raised; but wherein this identity fully consists we are unable to tell. They will be wondrously changed, as they will be raised up immortal, incorruptible, and spiritual. The bodies of the saints will bear the image of the heavenly. They will not require material aliment; and weakness and decay will exist in them no longer—“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” The resurrection of the saints will be to them the day of complete victory over death and the grave. The second coming of Christ will be the day of “the manifestation of the sons of

God," when their life shall be brought forth into bright effulgence, and they shall appear with Christ in glory." (Rom. viii. 19; Col. iii. 3.) But of any part of this altered state, and of the full glory of risen saints, we can only have at present imperfect and inadequate conceptions. It is not yet manifest what we shall be. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Enough to satisfy us amidst present darkness that a state of grace conducts to glory, and that at Christ's second coming His saints shall behold the full manifestation of His glory, and be fitted to share His blessedness for evermore.

The *reasons* of this partial manifestation, and of the *present obscurity* of our future condition, are various. Our *intellectual powers are limited*. We see but in part, and know only in part. We see now "through a glass darkly," but henceforth "we shall see face to face." The glory of the heavenly state, if fully revealed, would transcend our present mental powers to comprehend. We need faculties raised and adapted to the visions of heavenly bliss, before they can be presented to the mind in their effulgent splendour. This obscure manifestation *may be necessary* to our present condition. Enough is made known to quicken desire, and to urge to diligent search. Such light only is given as to raise our affections to things above, and to stimulate our efforts to reach a world where there is night no longer, and where, amid the effulgence of the Saviour's glory, all that respects the character and condition of the saints shines forth in noon-tide manifestation. We walk by star-light now, and wait for the morning of the day of glory, that shall never be interrupted or come to an end. We know not fully what we shall be, from *the greatness and grandness of the glory* to be hereafter revealed. Present afflictions of the saints work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) When Moses was given, in answer to prayer, the vision of God's glory,

he saw only "*the back parts*;" the full-face manifestation was reserved for the higher state in heaven. When Paul was caught up into the third heavens, he saw and heard things which it is *not possible** for a man to utter in language capable of being understood in the present state of our intellectual powers. No man can here see God and live. In heaven alone the saints see Jehovah's "face in righteousness, and when they awake they are fully satisfied with His likeness." (Ps. xvii. 15.) The *full extent* of the saints' future happiness prevents us from knowing now what we shall be. After all the discoveries made in the word, the thousandth part has not been told us of the glory that shall be revealed. The beatific fruition of God in heaven immeasurably transcends the enjoyment of God which faith realises here. The joys of God's salvation, which saints possess on earth, are *partial and evanescent*, like drops from heaven to refresh the spirit. In glory, the joys of the redeemed, like the ocean's fulness, are inexhaustible and eternal. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy: at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 2.)

III. CLEARNESS AT CHRIST'S APPEARANCE PRODUCING LIKENESS.

"When He shall appear," or be *made manifest*, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We have here presented a chief object of the believer's joyful and blessed hope—full likeness to Christ—then the *manner* in which it is attained—and the *certain knowledge* of it. This is the end of the Christian's supreme aim—to be in soul and body like Christ; to be assimilated to Him in character, happiness, and glory. This was all along the subject of his most fervent aspirations—the constant object of his diligent pursuit. The matter of his frequent,

* 2 Cor. xii. 4. The original word is better rendered *possible* than "*lucful*."

sorrowful complaint has been that he was so unlike Christ, his blessed pattern, in heart and life, and in all his services; and his most animating hope has ever been that one day he would be completely conformed to Him, and would share His honours and joys for ever. The transition from *God* in the opening of the verse, to *He* and *Him* in the latter clause, is noteworthy. It expresses the unity of the Father and the Son, that the beatific vision of God is to see the glorified Saviour, and that to be like Him is to be perfect as our Father who is in heaven is perfect. This likeness to God is conformity to Christ—"the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person."

This complete assimilation is represented as the result of a full vision of Christ at His second coming and glorious appearance. In *regeneration we are made like Christ*. Predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. viii. 29) in our calling, we are renewed after the image of Him that created us. Christ Jesus is our blessed all-perfect model. We exchange the image of the earthly, and henceforth we bear the image of the heavenly. All the lineaments and features of a perfect man in Christ are found in the new creature, though weak and imperfectly developed; but as imparted by Divine power, they are permanent and ineffaceable.

This likeness is *gradual and growing conformity here*. In the work of sanctification we grow up to "likeness to Christ in all things." The mind that was in Christ is in us; and we walk as He walked. We are saved by "the renewal of the Spirit, which He sheds on us abundantly." (Titus iii. 5.) Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) In the primeval temptation, Satan aspired to likeness of God in *power*, and man to likeness in *knowledge*; saints, renewed by the Spirit, aspire after His *goodness and holiness*. Under Divine leading and agency this becomes their happy attainment. The *word* is assimilating. They are sanctified by

the truth. Fellowship with Christ in *holy ordinances* generates likeness; and, through the indwelling and operation of the Spirit, the saints grow in resemblance to their living Head, and, reflecting His image, they shine as lights in the world. Thus the blessed design of their eternal election is accomplished. The Saviour appears as "the First-born among many brethren," all of whom exhibit a family likeness, as they shine "in the beauty of holiness."

This assimilation will be *perfect and instantaneous hereafter*. It is here incipient and gradual, with various interruptions like the day advancing, or the sun shining, with clouds at times concealing His disk, and obscuring His radiance as He ascends to meridian-brightness. At the Saviour's future glorious appearance the full day breaks, and the shadows for ever flee away. The sun shines forth in noon-tide splendour, reviving all earthly things, and having salvation under his beams. No longer are the saints under the process of a gradual imperfect renewal. The change at Christ's coming is *instantaneous*, as the likeness is perfect in every part, and in all that pertains to their character and condition. This likeness will be complete in the believer's *spiritual nature*—in knowledge, holiness, and felicity. Dim and imperfect discoveries of God and His works are done away. We shall behold Him as He is, and shall "see as we are seen, and know even as we are known." The saints at Christ's coming are made perfect in holiness. They appear faultless and unblameable before the throne. They see God's "face, and His name is in their foreheads." This perfection in holiness is the essence of heavenly bliss. Saints are brought to "the inheritance in light," and are heirs of God "in full possession, as all that creatures can enjoy of God's truth, and grace, and blessedness is communicated to them.

The *bodies* of the redeemed will be hereafter assimilated to Christ's *risen and glorified humanity*. "Who shall change the body of our vileness, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory." (Phil. iii. 21.) We wait now

"for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies," (Rom. viii. 23), when they shall be raised from the dust—glorious, incorruptible, and spiritual—reflecting in vivid lustre the features of the Elder Brother, their living Head. What shall be the full character and condition of the saints' resurrection-bodies we are unable now to tell or conceive. It is sufficient for us to have the assurance of faith that they shall be completely assimilated to the spotless perfect humanity of the Redeemer. Weakness and deformity shall be found in them no longer. They shall be youthful and undecaying and vigorous—the fit organs of the thoughts, desires, and purposes of glorified spirits, in the active and uninterrupted services of the upper sanctuary. The likeness to Christ which the bodies of the righteous assume at the resurrection may be that which He exhibited on the mount of transfiguration, or that in which He appeared to John in Patmos, when, overpowered with the brightness of His glory, he fell at His feet as one dead; or such as Moses saw on the mount, when his face, reflecting the glory, shone with dazzling splendour, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold him. The *material frame* of the saints here serves important purposes. It takes in lessons of knowledge from the external creation, and it enables to impart these lessons to others. The human soul can, through this instrument, impress the marks of its own mind and will on the surrounding universe. Hereafter, when the saints shall be fully assimilated in soul and body to their risen Lord, these purposes will be much more gloriously effected. The lordship of man over the creatures will be greatly heightened when it is restored through Christ. (Hob. ii. 7.) The saints in glory will be students in the highest school—"heaven's academy"—of God's works and ways; and they will be instruments then fully fitted to carry out His purposes toward them. "Upright men," in the morning of the resurrection, "shall have dominion." A part of their blessed recompense of reward is to have rule over

many cities; and as kings associated with their Lord in dominion and glory, they shall do His will, in promoting for ever the welfare of the universe. As "joint-heirs with Christ," they have the nearest access to God; and they are brought fully to know the transcendent glory and excellence of this inheritance.

This transformation will be effected at Christ's *glorious appearance*. "When He shall appear," or be "made manifest," we "shall be like Him." The believer's soul puts on this likeness at death. The Saviour comes, as He promised, to receive the departing spirit to Himself. The light at eventide which shines in the death chamber, and beams into the heart, makes known the coming of the Saviour, and is sent to conduct into the immediate presence of His glory. But the manifestation here referred to is the glorious appearance of the "great God and our Saviour," at the resurrection and last judgment, when He "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He shall then come to be "glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 10.)

He shall then appear in His *glorified humanity*, not "in the likeness of sinful flesh, nor in the dimness and obscurity that concealed His glory in His abased and suffering state on earth; but in all the tenderness and familiarity of an Elder Brother He will appear to His risen saints. Although coming in the clouds of heaven in great glory, there will be no estrangedness in His manifestation, and nought repulsive in His appearance. The "same Jesus" will come again in like manner as He went up into heaven, to resume the most endeared communion with His saints, and to finish the blessing which He began to speak as He ascended to glory. In human nature He spoke words of comfort to His disciples, and in the same nature He will come again to fulfil the promise—"I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John xvi. 22.) The aspects of the Saviour's humanity have been greatly changed from its state on

earth, but all its tender sympathy and affection remain. When He shall come again, these shall be conspicuously displayed, not to the few only who witnessed His departure from earth, but to the innumerable company of the ransomed, who will each see Him, being most closely united to Him as his Husband and Head—as His life brought forth into effulgent manifestation. He shall appear likewise *in the glory of Godhead*. He will come in His own and His Father's glory, with His mighty angels. The glory of His Divinity, of which He emptied Himself in His incarnation, will then shine forth in inconceivable lustre. Not as the partial and momentary glimpses that were seen on the mount of transfiguration, at His death and ascension, or to Stephen at death, or to John in Patmos. His appearance at His second coming will exhibit the glory which He had with the Father from the beginning, and display “the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily.” This will be reflected on His people with softened splendour from His mediatorial Person; His majesty and power seen in conjunction with His tenderness and sympathy, as the Chosen from among the folk—God in our nature. We shall see Him in perfect vision, the soul being freed from sin, and enlarged in all its faculties. The vision will be near, intimate, and most vivid, with nothing to appal or oppress; but, on the contrary, with everything fitted to fill and satisfy the soul, and to usher in the brightest and most wondrous discoveries. We shall “*see face to face*.” “In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.” (John xiv. 20.)

The *perfect and perpetual likeness of the saints* is caused by *Christ's glorious appearance*. As the face of the moon turned towards the sun reflects his brightness, and a flood of light is shed upon the heavens and earth by the sun's noon-tide radiance, so will it be at Christ's coming. The perfect vision of the glorified Redeemer will impart complete likeness to Him. Like the sun's rays now photographing at once an exact likeness, so Christ's coming in

glory will effect in an instant this amazing transformation on the bodies and spirits of His redeemed, and leave the likeness fixed to all eternity. This "seeing Him as He is," is not in His innermost Godhead, for this finite minds cannot take in but as manifested through His manhood. It is not moreover by the simple action either of the bodily eye or of the intellect, but it is through the state of the mind and heart. We shall *spiritually perceive and inwardly appreciate** Him as He is, and thus we shall attain to a full-face and indelible likeness of Him.

IN CONCLUSION.

The subject directs to—1. *Solemn self-trial*. Are you conscious of this relation, and of sharing the privileges of sons? The matter is of unspeakable importance, and should be the subject of frequent and earnest inquiry. Have you received Christ by faith, and thus obtained power to become the sons of God? Do you belong to the one family that in heaven and earth is named after Christ? Have you come out and are separated from the world lying in wickedness, and from all the ways of the evil one? With the new nature you have received the spirit of adoption. The "new name," which no man knows save he that receiveth it, is, in some measure, known to you, if you have obtained the adoption of sons. It is written in your foreheads, and stands forth in your profession and walk. You joyfully declare, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," while you are owned to be "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

2. Calls us to the *duties and privileges of sons*. We are required to "come out and be separate." The wondrous love that chose us and made us children, should constrain us to love the Father supremely, and serve Him with

* It is observable that the verb here, and in Matt. v. 8, Heb. xlii. 14, Rev. i. 7 and xxii. 4, is in the middle or reflexive voice, signifying *perception and appreciation*.

child-like devotion. We should confide in the Elder Brother, and walk in the brotherhood of faith with saints in heaven and earth, and in fellowship with holy angels—the elder children of the family. Our work on earth is to do willingly and devotedly the service assigned to adopted children, and to submit to its discipline and government. We should seek to have our title to the inheritance cleared; and while we live as children of God, we may claim and enjoy the high privileges of adoption—an interest in the Father's love, Divine protection and provision, the discipline of sons, the guidance of the Spirit, the guardianship of angels, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Let us not act unworthy of this high vocation, nor live beneath our privileges. "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

3. In the future made clear in Christ we have a *true test of our prospects of heaven*. The presence of Christ, and likeness to Him which it produces, are to all believers on earth the object of intense desire and of constant, earnest pursuit. Their true happiness is placed here; and in proportion as they realise it, the spiritual predominates over the material. They become weaned from the world, overcome it by faith, and experience the joys of God's salvation. The heaven which the renewed soul seeks, it finds greatly in spiritual communion with Christ now. His absence causes sorrow of spirit and mourning. When the Beloved withdraws, and clouds and darkness surround His throne, the heart of the saint pants for the living God as the hart for the brooks of water. "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him!" "When shall I come and appear before Him?" When he is brought near into His presence and enjoys His favour, which is better than life, the believer rests in God, his Rock, and glories in Him. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" (Isa. lxi. 10; Ps. lxxiii. 25.) The pledge and earnest of heavenly bliss are in gracious discoveries of Christ to the heart—the full possession

hereafter will consist in being brought to His glorious presence in heaven, and in perfect conformity to Him in soul, body, and spirit. In acquainting ourselves with Him we have peace surpassing understanding keeping the heart and mind. Seeking likeness to Him in all things, we advance to the stature of perfection. Thus our title to heavenly felicity is cleared up, and we put on meetness for its full enjoyment. The city above, which we seek, becomes more known and endeared to us. We see at times glimpses of its coming glory. The principal elements of its felicity are even now, to some degree, matter of conscious experience; and the joys that fill the heart, and that are expressed in spiritual praise, are the beginning and foretastes of the songs of exultant triumph with which the ransomed come to Zion above, and of the "overlasting joy" that beautifies their heads, when all clouds are dispelled, and sorrow and sighing for ever flee away. Let us thus test the religion we profess. Let us, by the views which we entertain of the future prospects of the saints, prove our character and life. Heaven must be our own country. We must be like the land to which we are journeying as our final loved home. As the presence of Christ and full resemblance to Him are the central objects of heavenly enjoyment, so, as these form our happiness here, and are to us objects of eager pursuit and of valued attainment, may we know heaven to be our appointed home, and that we shall, shining in the beauty of holiness, reflect its glory for ever.

Finally—Having Christ the centre of our affections and hope, we are called to the *constant and rigorous pursuit of holiness*. He who shall finally appear to the believer in glory is his Life and Portion—his Hope and All. He has drawn him to Himself with cords of love and bands of a man. Nothing in life or death is able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord; and because of His transcendent excellencies, and of benefits innumerable received from Him, his love to the Saviour is supreme, grateful, and constant. The heavenly state, to

which he looks forward, is that in which Christ's love to His redeemed will be expressed in its fulness, tenderness, and power, embracing all that were given Him of the Father, and all for whom He endured the agonies of the cross. There, too, glorified saints will be able to pour out the strongest love of their hearts upon Him who died to save them, and who has brought them the many sons to glory. This hope in Him is sure and all-purifying. "*Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as God is pure.*" As He who has called them is holy, so are they required to be holy in all manner of conversation. Their growing resemblance to Him here, as they see Him by faith, is at once the evidence of a well-grounded hope, and, at the same time, of progressive sanctification. Their assured prospect of the Saviour's second coming for their completed salvation, and of their resemblance to Him, being then perfect, furnish the most powerful and constraining motive to purity of heart and to all holy obedience. There is hope, bright and joyful, in the believer's death; for then, when absent from the body, he shall be present with the Lord, beholding His face in righteousness, and satisfied with His likeness. That "blessed hope," for which we now look, will be fully enjoyed at the resurrection, in "the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour." Our present great concern is to "follow after holiness, without which we cannot see the Lord," and to "wait with patience for what we see not." Soon will the everlasting day break, and all shadows flee away. In the glorious manifestation of the Saviour the sons of God, made partakers of His likeness, shall, with rapture and delight, welcome His coming. "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for Him; we shall be glad, and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. xxv. 9.)

THE DYING FAITH AND LAST TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH.

HEBREWS xi. 22—"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

IN the comprehensive and beautiful record of the power and effects of faith contained in this chapter, we have special references to its bright evidence as witnessed in the dying scenes of patriarchs, who died both before and after the flood. It is said—verse 13—"These all died in faith," as it was testified before concerning them that they had lived by faith. Then in verse 21, it is declared of Jacob that, when he was a dying, he "blessed both the sons of Joseph, leaning upon the top of his staff." The text presents us with a further instance, observable and striking, of the exercise of like precious faith in death of another servant of God.

There are few names more illustrious contained in the inspired record than that of Joseph, Rachel's first son. In his early, gracious endowments; in the severe trials allotted to him in youth; in the eminent spirit which he manifested when he was raised to dignity and honour; and in the forgiving temper and loving care which he showed towards his father's house, we behold a character of rarest excellence, and the strength of the internal principle by which he was actuated. He nourished his father in his old age; and, according to previous announcement, he put his hands upon his eyes as he closed them in death. When, after their father's death, his brethren apprehended evil from his hand, because of the wrongs they had done him, he dispelled their fears and re-assured their hopes. He told them that all they had done was rendered subservient to God's purpose of good,

both to the church of God and to others. "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. l. 20.)

When the time of Joseph's death drew nigh he summoned to his dying bed his brethren who remained in life, and the descendants of such as had died, addressed to them words of solemn and affecting import, and gave them a charge, confirmed by the most weighty sanctions. Joseph was removed by death sooner than some of his brethren,—the Divine design being that, by shortening his life, the way might be opened for the affliction foretold to Israel, which came not long after his decease. The brief account of Joseph's last interview with his brethren, and of the exercise of his dying faith, is given in Genesis l. 24-26, furnishing the appropriate conclusion of the history of the Israelitish patriarchs, and of the remarkable first part of sacred Scripture. "I die: but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land into the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The basis of the Apostle's statement in the text is obviously this historic record of Moses. In brief but most significant and affecting terms, he signalises the dying faith of Joseph in connection with the expression of the faith of his father Jacob in like solemn circumstances, which had occurred more than half a century before. In one aspect the faith of both father and son were the same, being, as a gracious principle implanted, "the substance of things hoped for," and having for its object the fulfilment of God's promise respecting his people's deliverance. But it would seem plain from the apostolic testimony that the Spirit designed to represent Joseph's faith as stronger and higher than Jacob's. The commandment of the latter concerning his burial, with the expressions that accompanied it, had more special reference to the past, and was appro-

priate to one who felt that he was but a stranger and a pilgrim in Egypt; whose natural affections and memory were clinging, even in death, to those who had lived and died in Canaan. That of Joseph was by one who possessed high worldly power and honour, and who died a prince in the land of Egypt. The injunction respecting his unburied body and bones declared strongly and most impressively his ruling desire that, even after death, he might be among the people of Israel. He had no doubt of their return to the land which God had given to their fathers in covenant; and he was entirely willing, so far as his bones could represent him, to share all the future fortunes of God's people; not to be separated from them so long as they continued in the house of bondage, to go forth with them when they departed, and then to rest in hope in his grave in the land of promise. What fuller identification could there be proclaimed with God's chosen people in life and death? what stronger faith could be expressed in things unseen and hoped for? This faith of Joseph in death—the besitting close of an eminently useful and honourable life of a true servant of God—appears deserving of a brief illustration; and the lessons which this dying scene inculcates cannot but be regarded as of much practical importance in our own day, and to all future generations.

The historical record in Genesis, equally with the Apostle's statement, lays the stress upon two declarations concerning Joseph's faith—1. He "made mention" at death of the departing of the children of Israel;" and 2. "He gave commandment" or a charge "concerning his bones." In both instances there was a lively exercise of the precious faith, which in all ages has distinguished those who are called and chosen servants of God, and the predestined heirs of glory. We notice—

I. THE FIRST INSTANCE OF JOSEPH'S FAITH, IN MAKING MENTION OF ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT.

The whole life of Joseph—so remarkable for trials and deliverances, so distinguished for integrity and usefulness—was characterised by eminent graces, and their rich and plentiful fruits. His faith in God, and firm trust in His promise and providence, were especially conspicuous in all the diversified scenes through which he passed. Of the various marked incidents in the life of Joseph in which the strength of his faith was tested, and came forth strengthened by the trial, it is noteworthy that the Spirit, speaking by the Apostle, selects only one at the close of life, and exhibits the steadfastness and triumph of the internal principle which had distinguished him above others throughout the whole of his eventful history.

The *time* in which He gave distinct expression to a strong and deliberate act of faith is particularly marked. It is indicated by the phrase, "when He died," or was "a dying." A similar expression is used in relation to *Jacob*, his father, in the preceding verse—"By faith, Jacob, when he was a dying." The original participle used in reference to Joseph's death is different, however, from that which is employed in speaking of Jacob's; indicating, it seems probable, that his work was *completed* by this full avowal of his confidence in God's faithful word of promise, and he received the *end* of his faith in the lively hope of salvation for himself and for Israel. Joseph had reached the assigned limit of his life on earth; he had lived one hundred and ten years, and had seen his children and children's children to the third generation. Surrounded by objects of domestic endearment, and in the enjoyment of public honour and influence, the fruit of eminent usefulness, he is brought to the closing scene of his earthly history, either by gradually increasing infirmities, or by the sudden collapse of bodily strength. Sensible that his life-work was completed amid felt tokens of dissolution, his brethren—those who still

survived, and some of the children of others—were summoned into his presence. Then, from the lips that had so often spoken to them wise, faithful, and loving counsels, were uttered the solemn words—"I die." It was the announcement that all his concern respecting them, and all his intercourse with them on earth, were now completed. These words, spoken from the dying bed of a tried friend, had, in the circumstances in which they were uttered, and the directions with which they were accompanied, everything fitted to fix the attention, and to give weight to the message. They were the last words of one who had done much to secure their attachment, and who had the highest claims upon their ready obedience. They were expressive of his firm and unwavering faith. Viewing death near, Joseph was calm, confident, and hopeful. Bright as the mellow splendour of the sun setting without a cloud, his was the serene close of a course which continued to shine more and more till the perfect day.

This dying declaration and charge showed him who *gave it as at peace with God*—far from fear, and chiefly concerned about others. The faith by which Joseph was early distinguished, had, throughout life's duties and trials, produced its proper effects. In afflictions and persecutions in youth, in strong temptations and conflicts, in an elevated station, and greatly important public work, he held fast his integrity, and displayed the lustre of a pure and noble character. He had obtained peace with God in justification. The trial of his faith, more precious than gold, had been found to praise, and honour, and glory. He had overcome the world and all its enmities and temptations by faith; and, in "hearkening" to God's "commandments," his "peace was as a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isa. xlviii. 18.) The latter end was now peace, undisturbed by the billows of death, or the fear of judgment. The eminent public spirit which characterised him through life is conspicuous in the parting scene. In this interview with his brethren, he makes no mention of

himself, or of aught that pertained to private or family interests. His whole concern expressed is about the future of Israel, and for the prosperity of the church. He loses sight of himself, and is wholly wrapt up in spirit in the fulfilment of the promise of the covenant, and in the coming glory of God's people. Such has ever been the fullest and brightest exhibition of true faith. Thus, Moses, before his death, in his final instructions and parting benedictions, as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, preferred Israel's enlargement and blessing to all personal and family honours. And such faithful and tried servants of Christ as Calvin and Knox, and the martyrs Cameron, Cargill, and Renwick, displayed in death their strong and heroic faith, in regarding the prosperity of the church of Christ, and the triumph of His cause, as their highest source of happiness and joy.

The first instance of Joseph's strong faith is expressed when it is declared—“*He made mention of the departure of the children of Israel.*” The object of it was the deliverance of God's people out of Egyptian bondage. Of this he made *special mention*, as the great matter which then occupied his thoughts and earnest desires, and which, of all others, was a subject of deepest concern to his brethren surrounding him. The matter, presented in so engrossing an aspect to his mind and theirs, in his dying hour, was not simply the termination of the lengthened period of bondage and suffering, but it was Israel's deliverance from troubles foretold, and freedom from subjection and distress, in accordance with God's covenant. With firm confidence and assured hope he declared, “God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land into the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” The faith thus expressed implied his expectation of deliverance from *diversified trials and great distress*. God is said in scripture to “visit” when He draws near to help in trouble, and when He interposes to rescue from the hands of enemies, and from great dangers and distress. He visits in the day

of trouble great. He makes bare His arm to free from danger. He brings speedy help to those who are overcome and helpless. "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people, and am come down to deliver them." (Exodus iii. 7.) In the covenant transaction with Abraham, recorded in Genesis xv., when the bondage and deliverance of Israel were symbolically exhibited by "the smoking furnace" and the "burning lamp that passed between the pieces," it was announced that the patriarch's seed should be "a stranger in a land that was not theirs," and should be in servitude and afflicted for four hundred years. Joseph had this assurance full in view when he spoke of God's certain visitation, and of Israel's departure from Egypt. His faith rested on God, the helper of His people, and was stayed on the assurance that, in their great distress, "the lamp" of hope and salvation would shine amidst the thick darkness. It was the assured pledge to him and to them that when God saw that their help was gone, He would visit in mercy and in love, for the full deliverance of His people, and for the sure destruction of all their enemies.

Joseph's faith reposed *wholly on the promise and covenant of Jehorah*. It grasped the promise, *spoken three hundred years before*, and took hold of the covenant made with Abraham. Like the father of the faithful, Joseph appropriated God, in His covenant-relations, as his "Shield and exceeding great reward"—as his Portion, and Light, and Salvation. It saw "the promise afar off, and was persuaded of it, and embraced it." The effect was to profess joyfully the pilgrim's lot on earth, and to seek a stable and glorious inheritance. All the church's future fortunes—her trials and conflicts, her deliverances, enlargement, and triumph—were irrevocably determined in the covenant; and the blessed provision was revealed and brought near in the faithful word of promise. On this the patriarch stayed his dying faith, and from this he held out the bright and sweet hope to his brethren. The covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," was all his

"salvation and desire;" and the promise, "yea and amen" in the Mediator, absolute and unconditional, was firm and steadfast, as the anchor ground of his hope. So ought we, in life and death, to exercise strong faith for deliverance and salvation on the sure word of promise, and on the everlasting covenant. The faith in life by which we receive a "good report," and become "heirs of righteousness," is here; this is a true, tried, triumphant faith in dying. "By two immutable things"—His word and oath—"in which it was impossible for God to lie, we have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us." (Heb. vi. 18.) •

The near prospect of Israel's *bondage and helpless condition* did not impair or weaken Joseph's faith. The hard servitude and grievous affliction of Jacob's seed in Egypt were to precede the deliverance, and be of long continuance. God had said to Abraham, "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years." (Gen. xv. 13.) This bitter bondage was near at hand, and its dark shadows were projected on the vision of the future. The present peace and prosperity of Israel were to be succeeded by degraded servitude and great oppression. Yet the prospect of embittered suffering did not stumble or impair Joseph's faith in ultimate deliverance. Heavy trials he knew to be a necessary part of the allotment in the covenant; and these were ordained to come first, that the redemption from Egypt might be seen coming from God's hand—the fruit of covenant grace and love; and that the glory of the deliverance might redound to Jehovah, the covenant God of their fathers. Emphatically did Joseph to his brethren "make mention," or *call to remembrance*, their departure from Egypt. He laid claim to no new revelation. He reminded them of God's covenant with Abraham, and called to their remembrance the faithful word of promise, and the circumstances connected with its fulfilment. Faith like Joseph's, instead

of failing in the view of difficulties and sufferings, gathers now strength from the trial. It rests on Divine faithfulness, and trusts to almighty power. Great mountains become a plain, and the darkness preceding renders the day of promised deliverance the more glorious. The test and trial of the church's faith is the hard bondage and lengthened oppression through which she must pass ere she reaches her future rest in glory. Yet the clear apprehension of this invigorates faith, and leads to realise its joyful reward. Out of weakness we are made strong. Through much tribulation we inherit the kingdom. And fixing the eye of faith upon the glory to be revealed, we are prepared for conflict and sufferings. We are "more than conquerors," even when engaged in the warfare; and present afflictions, felt to be light and momentary, become instrumental in working "out a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." The church's deliverance and victory are effected after the same manner in all ages. After great oppression, and times of wasting and weakness, God's glorious power is displayed in working manifold salvation in midst of the earth. The iron furnace, and the rod of the oppressor, are the lot of the righteous. When these have effected their desired purpose, the power of the enemy is broken, and the church, purified and enlarged, comes forth to glorious freedom, and appears most beautiful—the joy of the earth.

This expression of Jacob's faith in the promise of deliverance was *most seasonable*. It animated his hope and elevated his own heart in the hour of death. It shut up his brethren to entire confidence in their covenant-God, and raised them above darkness and despondency, by leading them to rest on the promise, and assuring them of an inheritance excelling in glory. It was Joseph's farewell to all the power and riches of Egypt. Earthly fame and honour sink into insignificance, compared with the portion of Jacob and the covenant-inheritance of his people. Thus should we cherish faith's estimate in life, and thus

should we seek to realise the strength and victory of faith in death. We should reckon that neither the possessions, nor "the sufferings of this present time," are worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Amidst darkness and discouragement, we should look to the hills whence our aid comes; and, in dying, we should seek to give expression to the assured hope of Zion's deliverance, and of the truth's triumph. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness; come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God." (Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6; Jer. li. 10.) To his brethren it was the most suitable time to make mention of the promise, and of its certain accomplishment. Through their brother, their head and benefactor, they had been brought into a state of great outward comfort and prosperity. They were rich, and increased in goods; and from the influence which Joseph exercised near the throne, and the benefits which his wise administration had conferred on the nation, they might reasonably hope that their prosperous condition would be lasting. To wean them from worldly things, he sought in death to fix their thoughts and affections upon the riches of the covenant, as greatly surpassing the treasures of Egypt. In the view of calamities which he foresaw were approaching, he raised their hopes to the promised deliverance. He gathered in comfort for himself, in the thought that though he would not live to witness the fulfilment of the promise, he would yet die in the full assurance that it would be abundantly accomplished.

II. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH SEEN IN THE COMMANDMENT CONCERNING HIS BONES.

The solemn injunction given by Joseph to his brethren was peculiar to him alone. Others of the Old Testament patriarchs had given expressions to joyful hope in death. Jacob had spoken of being buried in the sepulchre in Machpelah, and of fellowship after death with loved ones,

who had been interred there before. Joseph spoke expressly of his unburied body remaining with Israel through all coming trials, till the end of their bondage in Egypt, and then of his bones being carried with them, and obtaining sepulture, when *they* would rest from their wanderings, and be established in the land of Canaan. Everything connected with this instance of the faith of the dying saint is significant and expressive, indicating his assured trust in the covenant of God, and presenting to us subjects of most solemn and weighty instruction.

The Apostle says, "by faith, Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones." The original Greek term denotes a *strict charge*, an authoritative injunction concerning a matter which it were criminal to neglect. It is elsewhere used respecting the sprinkling of the blood that ratifies the covenant. (Heb. x. 20.) It was in this case a *command* expressive of sovereign authority, as Joseph had the rule over his brethren. As indicating an obligation superadded and most weighty, the sacred historian tells us that Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry my bones from hence." (Gen. l. 25.)

The injunction given was *an oath*, and of the nature of a *vow* or *covenant*, that was considered binding long after. A solemn appeal by oath to Jehovah, as a witness and a judge, in a matter of great importance, is warranted alike by the light of nature and by scripture—precept and example. As Abraham took an oath of his servant about espousing a wife for his son Isaac, so Joseph exacted an oath of his brethren, and bound them by vow and covenant to perform what ~~he~~ regarded to him and them as of transcendent interest. It is evidently implied that the vow thus demanded and given would have an obligation reaching far beyond the life of the contracting parties. Joseph knew the time definitely fixed in the covenant with Abraham for Israel's emancipation, and that several generations were yet to come till it would be effected. Not fewer than one hundred

and forty years after his death did the bondage in Egypt continue. Then there were forty years' wandering in the wilderness, and the wars of Canaan were not ended till a quarter of a century afterwards. More than *two hundred years* had expired from the time that this oath and vow was uttered at Joseph's dying bed, until shortly before the death of Joshua his bones found interment in Shechem. Yet long after the brethren of Joseph were all dead, and throughout more than six generations that intervened, amid all the changes and wanderings, and rebellions of Israel, the obligation of this vow was felt, the dying command of Joseph was obeyed, and the covenant was recognised as binding, until the duty which was the matter of the vow was discharged. Could there be a fuller, clearer example, tantamount to an authoritative precept, that covenants whose matter is moral and religious have a continued obligation, extending long beyond the time when the parties pledge themselves to God and to one another?

The *wisdom and filial piety* of Joseph were seen in this command. His injunction resembled that of his father, in preferring Canaan to Egypt as the resting place for his earthly remains; and yet he did not enjoin his burial in a distant place immediately after his death. This might have been regarded by the Egyptians as indicating that one whom they had raised to power and honoured in life designed in death to be wholly separated from them, and might have led them to treat his brethren remaining among them as an alien race, fit only for subjection and oppression. Jacob had, in token of peculiar affection for Joseph, the son of his loved Rachel, assigned him a peculiar lot at Shechem—the portion conquered from the Amorite; and though he neither claimed nor possessed it in life, yet he selected it to be the repository of his dust, thus giving evidence of his remembrance of his father's faith, and of his paternal affection. A faith like Joseph's in death will evidence itself by meekness of wisdom, and

by honouring the memory and imitating the example of godly parents.

Again—The command of Joseph concerning his bones impressively showed that he *designed to be completely separated from Egypt*, desiring to retain none of its honours, nor to have his memory perpetuated there. On many grounds, Joseph might have wished to have his name handed down to posterity in connection with the annals of Egypt. He had been called by singular providences to fill a prominent place in the counsels and government of the nation. He had been truly a benefactor of the kingdom, relieving, by his wise and upright administration, national distress, and raising the country to high distinction. Equally by prince and people he was deservedly held in the highest reputation, and his fame as a governor might have adorned the annals of Egypt, and been transmitted with honour to remote posterity. Besides, in right of their mother, his children were entitled to princely rank among the hereditary nobility of the nation. From the respect in which he was universally held, had he desired it, he might have been buried in the chief of Egyptian sepulchres; his name might have been inscribed on the proudest national monument. He might have been the head of a long line of noble descendants—the record of his character and deeds giving them eminent distinction. All these worldly advantages, Joseph by faith openly renounced. Connection with Egypt, and its wealth and power, and honour for himself and his family, he esteemed of no value, and preferred to them all the lot of God's Israel—an inheritance among those who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." Like Moses, he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." (Heb. xi. 26.) His faith was the victory by which he overcame the world.

The command of Joseph concerning his bones was, furthermore, his *pointed testimony against Egypt's idolatry*.

When Moses died, the Lord buried him, and his sepulchre remained unknown, to prevent Israel, ever so prone to idol-worship, from showing undue veneration to his tomb. So Joseph cut off opportunities of superstitious, idolatrous worship from the Egyptians, by entrusting the preservation of his unburied body to his brethren, and the deportation of his bones, when their descendants forsook Egypt. Ancient Egypt was mad upon its idols; and in a country where the heavenly luminaries, the powers of nature, irrational animals, inanimate objects, and even human vices were worshipped, had Joseph been buried amid the nation's regrets and honours, in future times pilgrimages would have been made to his tomb, and costly offerings presented. His name would have filled a high niche in the national temples, and his relics would have received the numerous oblations of superstitious veneration. As through life he maintained full separation from Egyptian idolatry, and acknowledged his dependence on God alone, and his jealousy for His glory, so in death he testified his abhorrence of all idol worship, by enjoining the removal of his bones, that he might render it impossible for the Egyptians ever after to pay them divine homage or superstitious veneration.

Not less were the guardianship of Joseph's unburied body, as entrusted to the Israelites while they remained in Egypt, and the silent coffin and lifeless bones, accompanying them in their march through the wilderness, until they were lodged in the sepulchre in Canaan, *a constant testimony against lapsing unto idolatry*, to which they were ever prone, and a designed *preservative from all practice of idolatry*. The Egyptians may have resigned all care of the funeral of Joseph to his brethren; and whether his body was deposited in one of the pyramids till the time of the exodus, or preserved in private families, it bore a silent but emphatic testimony against all fellowship with the idols of Egypt. When the Lord had "famished the gods of Egypt," and Moses, and the many thousands of Israel,

left the house of bondage, they carried the bones of the patriarch with them (Exod. xiii. 19)—a public testimony that they maintained a marked separation from all idolatry. In all their future journeyings the precious casket, as it accompanied the host, proclaimed the same abhorrence of all creature-worship. The bones of Joseph, as they were borne out of Egypt, proclaimed the destruction of its idols; and the rest which at length they obtained in Canaan virtually declared that the glory of Canaan was, that it was a land purged from idolatry, and in which Israel's God was alone honoured and worshipped.

Moreover, this solemn injunction was given *to encourage the faith and animate the expectation of God's people*. At Joseph's death a change was at hand in the condition of Israel in Egypt; and the prophetic warning given to Abraham of grievous affliction for his seed was about to be accomplished. They were encouraged to meet the approaching trouble by the assurance of a joyous return to Canaan. When Jacob, in dying, charged his sons to bury him in the sepulchre of his fathers, his descendants were in ease and prosperity in Egypt; yet his charge taught them impressively not to choose Egypt as their home, nor to rest in its possessions and pleasures. It virtually inculcated that they should ever keep Canaan in view as their allotted inheritance. Their hope was to be centred in the land promised in covenant, and their habit of life was to be conformed to it, and not to the spirit and conduct of Egypt. But Joseph in dying desisted the thickening gloom of trouble and long oppression before his brethren; and he cheered their hearts by assuring them of an outgate of the trial, in their departure from the house of bondage, and an entrance into the final rest in Canaan. Instead of asking them to do for him what he did for his father, he enjoined them to keep his bones with them, till their oppression would be ended. He was willing to share all their lot, and virtually to have full fellowship with them in suffering and deliverance. He would impart to them the believing hope

that cheered himself in death. The light from heaven that beamed upon the death-scene showed clearly that the tribulations of Egypt would end in the peace and joy of Canaan. As he committed his bones to them to keep in trust, and took from them a solemn vow, he virtually required that they should never, in times of deepest darkness and depression, lose sight of the promised rest and blessing. While they kept the precious deposit—as often as they looked on the coffin which enclosed the sacred remains—they were to exercise the same strong faith, and cherish the same bright hope, as distinguished the closing scene of Joseph's useful and honourable life.

This instance of Joseph's faith in his dying *command, and the oath and vow* that he exacted of his brethren, could not but *deeply affect and impress them at the time*. What effect the preservation of his unburied body had upon Israel in years of bitter bondage and great oppression, the sacred history does not inform us. But we can hardly doubt that, among such as believed God's word, and waited for His salvation, the remembrance of Joseph's dying charge, and the preservation of his remains, would often remind them of God's covenant with Abraham, and powerfully revive the expectation of the promised deliverance. Through the dark clouds that encompassed them, rays of hope would shine upon their degradation and misery, pointing them to a glorious future. On two notable occasions in the subsequent history, we are assured that this expression of dying faith came into vivid remembrance. On the bright morning of Israel's freedom, as they went out, a harnessed host, from Egypt, "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him." It seems not unlikely that this was done by some public act, so as to strengthen the faith, deepen the sense of covenant-obligation, and swell the holy joy of the whole congregation. And when the conquest of Canaan under Joshua was completed, and Israel had found rest in their covenanted inheritance, it is recorded that they buried the bones of Joseph in Shechem, "in a parcel of ground which Jacob

bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." (Joshua xxiv. 32.) The sepulture of these precious relics doubtless took place before the death of Joshua, and most probably on the occasion of the solemn convention and public act of covenanting at Shechem. This would forcibly call to remembrance the covenant made with their fathers; it added another weighty sanction to the act of renewed federal dedication; and it formed a most fitting performance of the oath and vow made two hundred years before. As the remembrance of this last act of Joseph's faith throughout all the intervening years tended to confirm Israel's faith in the promise and hope of deliverance and joyful rest, so the final sepulture of Joseph's bones exhibited their sense of continued covenant-obligation—their ready obedience, and the sure possession of the covenanted inheritance.

III. SOME SOLEMN LESSONS WHICH THESE INSTANCES OF JOSEPH'S FAITH INCULCATE.

The life of faith of God's servants is full of important instructions to others; and the declarations which it makes are lessons the most weighty and valuable to future generations. When the believer can say, "The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me;" or, "Yea, doubtless, I count all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord," such utterances, embodied in action, are calculated to make a deep impression, and to lead others to like holy living. The testimony of dying believers, expressive of the principles that governed their life, and of the hope that animates them in death, is fitted to exert a potent and extensive influence. Believers should seek to be enabled to give a distinctive testimony, by their faith in dying, for the glory

of God and the edification of the church. Ability to utter it is an honour conferred upon a dying saint crowning his profession; and a benefit to the church, strengthening and confirming its faith, and invigorating its hope of deliverance and victory. The testimony of the faith of Jacob spoke emphatic lessons of warning and exhortation to his family and to the church throughout future ages. Still more do the last words of Joseph teach lessons which have been of eminent value to the people of God through the generations that are past, and that will be found important till the time of the end. We need always to learn them; and in the period of promised enlargement and blessing that is yet to come these lessons will be better understood and more generally practised. Others, encouraged by the bright examples of saints who lived and died by faith, will, in dying, give like testimony to the truth of the promises, and to the hope of deliverance and triumph for the church and cause of Christ.

The assurance and command of Joshua should lead us to *seek like precious faith*. Joseph's faith, tested throughout life in eventful scenes, was seen strong in death, and yielding rich, precious fruits. Tried by adversity and prosperity—by temptation and allurement, by calumny and reproach—it had stood the trial, and was found more precious than perishable gold, unto praise and honour and glory. It was displayed conspicuously, as it had before been—working by love, overcoming the world, and realising things unseen and eternal. Our first concern should be by faith to yield ourselves to God, to separate from an evil world, and to live for eternity. We should accept of Christ Jesus as He is offered to us in the Gospel, in all His offices and relations, and for all that we need of benefit and blessing. A life of holiness is to rest on Him as all-sufficient, and to look away from all else to Him as the Author and Finisher of faith. Thus living, we shall die in faith; and the principles and desires which actuated us throughout life will be strong and opera-

tive in death. The rich mellow fruits of harvest will exhibit the careful culture that preceded. The decided testimony uttered from the bed of death will declare the strong convictions that were cherished throughout life, and the precious truths that formed the support and joy of the heart amidst labour and conflict, in suffering and victory.

We are taught by this bright example to rest all upon *the Divine promise and covenant*. Throughout the varying scenes of life—under its strange vicissitudes, its active engagements, and manifold trials—Joseph relied for support and comfort and deliverance on the promise and covenant of God. When in boyhood he dwelt with Jacob, his father, in tents, as a pilgrim and sojourner, he was “hoir with him of the same promise.” In subsequent great afflictions from the hands of unnatural brethren, when he was sold into slavery, and lay in prison, and his feet were bound in fetters, the covenant of peace was his confidence and hope. “The word of the Lord” tried him in prison. His faith was exercised in the assured promise, and when the trial was completed deliverance was commanded. In his elevated station the blessings of the covenant and promise were, in his estimation, greater riches than all the power and treasures of Egypt. And, after the enjoyment of high dignity and honour, and of all the profit and pleasures that the world could afford, when dying he rested on the covenant as all his salvation and desire; and he chose the promise for his lot and portion. This is ever the true estimate and choice of faith. God is appropriated as His people’s God. Christ is embraced as their light and salvation; and the promises, exceeding great and precious, received by faith, become the conveyance-deeds of the rich legacies of the New Testament. An interest in the covenant of redemption is all the blessing of life. The promise, “I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee,” guarantees to parents and their children freedom from the curse, the favour of God as better

than life, and all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. The time and circumstances of a believer's death are arranged in the infinite wisdom and love of the covenant. The promises, "All ye and amon in Christ," support and cheer in the hour of sinking humanity. The presence of the Good Shepherd with His sheep, when they pass through the valley of death-shade, dispels fear and illuminates the darkness, while His rod of power and pastoral care, and His staff of promise, abundantly comfort. The covenant and promise, securing deliverance and rest to the church, when apprehended by faith in dying, shed light upon the closing scene, and complete the believer's triumph. Greater than any personal benefit is the prospect of Israel's deliverance; brighter than all other objects is the glory of the church's enlargement and ultimate triumph. "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." "Oh! that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it." (Ps. xiv. 7; Isa. ii. 2.)

We are, moreover, taught by this example to cherish, in life and death, *heart-felt concern about the future of Christ's cause and people*. Throughout the whole public life of Joseph in Egypt, he manifested a deep and constant interest in those who were then the church of God on earth. In his high station he was "the man sent before," by whom the house of Jacob was fed. When his father and brethren were brought down to Egypt, he was the "nourisher of his old age," and their protector and benefactor. In assigning them a portion in the land of Goshen, and preserving them from the temptations of the court, separate from the Egyptians, he was mainly actuated by the desire that they might be kept uncontaminated by

the idolatry of Egypt, and that they might walk in the way of covenant-obedience, and enjoy covenant-blessing. His dying charge to his brethren assured them of support and deliverance through the power and presence of the God of their fathers; and the trust he committed to them, of his bones to be carried with them, was expressive of the strongest hope of future enlargement and prosperity. The interests of the church of God will always occupy a chief place in the believer's thoughts and desires in life and in death. The church is the grand instrument for the display of Jehovah's glory, and for effecting the designs of His love to the world. All the saint's "springs" of comfort and joy are there. The future extension and prosperity of the church will be the grand means of blessing to those whose welfare we are bound to seek—to friends and relatives, to the nations of the earth, to the universal family of mankind. True prosperity in life is found in loving Zion. (Ps. cxxii. 6.) A lively faith in dying looks forward to Divine visitations of favour and blessing to the church, and evidences its presence and power by saying and doing all that is possible for promoting its future enlargement and blessing. Such faith was shown by Moses in his last solemn charges recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, and in his prophetic benedictions; by Joshua, when he led Israel to covenant at Shechem; by Knox and Calvin, and other eminent servants of Christ, whose first and last thoughts in life and at death were chiefly engaged about the cause and kingdom of Christ in the world.

The *voluntary* relinquishment of *earthly honours and distinctions* is expressively taught us by the example of Joseph. While he enjoyed power and greatness, he overcame the world by faith. The distinction which he coveted in life for himself and his family was to be numbered with the despised seed of Abraham, and not with the rich and noble in Egypt. The posthumous fame which he aimed at was not that his name and posterity should be found in the

monuments of a people renowned for learning, the knowledge of laws and arts, and extensive power and dominion; but it was to be identified with a people in covenant with God, not numbered with the nations, and whose lot was that of "strangers and pilgrims on earth." All that he desired for his name after death was that his unburied body should share Israel's fortunes in Egypt, and in their deliverance and wanderings, till his withered bones should find a resting-place in the land of promise. Could there be possibly given a more striking and impressive instance of the despite of all the proud honours and distinctions of the world—a more distinct and powerful testimony against the vanities of human greatness and ambition? Thus should we learn by faith to live *in* the world, as not *of* it—to use its possessions for promoting the glory of Christ, and to subordinate all to the establishment of His kingdom. And at death the reality and power of our faith will be shown, not in seeking to have our names and deeds recorded in the roll of the great and honourable among men, but in the Lamb's book of life, and among those who lived not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. Our works on earth for the promotion of the Saviour's glory and the advancement of His cause are our best monument after death. If our names are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, they can never be blotted out; and the works which we did for Christ will follow us when we rest from earthly labours, to be mentioned in the judgment, as evidences of the power of grace in us, and to be the measure of our future gracious reward.

Finally—*The bodies of the saints are proper objects of loving concern in death*, as they are destined to share the glory of the future resurrection, and to be partakers of heavenly bliss. The charge of Joshua concerning his bones implied his assured belief that his earthly remains would share in the lot of the righteous, and that they would enjoy the bliss of future immortality. His flesh would rest in the hope of being afterwards raised incorruptible and glorious, to

partake with the glorified soul the full measure of heavenly felicity. Such joyful prospects and expectations have all the saints. Their bodies, redeemed by the blood of Christ, are temples of the Holy Ghost, and members of the mystical body, of which Christ is the living and perpetual Head. They should now be kept from all pollution of the flesh and spirit, presented as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God," and employed continually as instruments of righteousness. In dying, believers resign their bodies as well as their spirits to Him who formed them, redeemed them from the curse, and preserved them in providence. They are to "sleep in Jesus," till He comes again to awaken them to a glorious resurrection. Due care about our bodies in death, and about the dead bodies of the saints, is a fruit of faith. Believing that our bodies have a share in the redemption of Christ, we joy in the assured hope that at His second coming they will be partakers of His glory. We wait "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." This "body of our vileness" will be changed into "the body of His glory," "according to the power whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." * Canaan, secured in promise and covenant to Abraham's seed, was by the faith of ancient believers the type and pledge of the heavenly inheritance. So should we, who value fellowship with saints in life and death, rejoice in the blissful hope that our bodies, ransomed from the grave, will possess the honour and glory of occupying their assigned place in the heavenly Canaan—vigorous, incorruptible, and reflecting, in perfect lustre and beauty, the likeness of Him who is "the First Born among many brethren."

* Phil. iii. 20. So should the original be rendered more emphatically.

THE CHURCH FIRST BLESSED, THE GRAND WAY OF THE WORLD'S CONVERSION.

PSALM lxxvii. 1, 2—"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations."

THE general, if not unanimous, concurrence of ancient versions and expositors ascribes the authorship of this beautiful ode to David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel." But the occasion of its composition, of its first introduction to the tabernacle worship, and the object for which it was penned, have been matter of diversified opinion. It may have been sung as a national, joyful anthem, when an attached people conducted David, their legitimate sovereign, over Jordan, on the suppression of Absalom's rebellion; or it may have been employed by the many thousands of the assembled tribes, with the monarch at their head, as the expression of devout thanksgiving and prayer, on the bringing up of the ark—the centre of national worship, the symbol of the Divine presence—to its resting-place on Mount Zion. Viewing it in its prophetic and evangelical character, it may be not improperly regarded, with the *Syrian* translator, as "a prophecy concerning the calling of the Gentiles, and the preaching of the Apostles, and also concerning the judgments of the Lord." *Horae*, who finds in the psalms everywhere constant and clear allusions to the person, work, and kingdom of Christ, considers this psalm to be a "hymn for the feast of tabernacles," which had in it less of type and shadow than any other of the ancient Jewish festivals, and which is predicted to be observed in spirit in the last times of the Gospel dis-

pensation (Zech. xiv. 16), and to be "prophetic of a general conversion of the world to the worship of God."

Like many others of the songs of inspiration, this sixty-seventh psalm unites the outburst of grateful praise with earnest prayer. Petitions the most weighty about matters of transcendent importance to ourselves individually and to the church, are offered, as they are dictated by the Spirit—the effusions of the heart; and these refer to bright predictions at the close of abundant universal blessing to the church and the world. This psalm is properly a grand *missionary hymn*—as much suited for the praises of the church under the new economy as under the old. Not unfrequently has it been alleged that the church under the Old Testament was not missionary in its spirit and character, and that it thus stands in sharp contrast, if not in direct antagonism, to the catholic and aggressive spirit of the new economy. It may be admitted that there is some ground for the contrast. The ancient dispensation was limited, as only one race, the descendants of Abraham in the line of the promised seed, were included in the covenant. The "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile remained standing until the Substance of the types going before had come, and "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" was set aside by the more spiritual institutions of the Gospel. Under the new economy, distinctions of race and nation were to exist no longer. Jew and Gentile became both "one in Christ." The Gospel of peace is to be preached to every creature, whatever be his character and condition, and to be universally proclaimed for "the obedience of faith to all nations." Before the close of the dispensation, all kings and princely thrones will be in visible and willing subjection to the reigning Redeemer. Earthly kingdoms, submitting to His authority and ruled by His laws, shall become, in the fullest sense, "the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ," and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. Yet it is improper to represent the

church under the Mosaic ritual as devoid of a missionary spirit, and as not earnestly seeking the salvation of the heathen. During the whole period of the ancient dispensation, there were proselytes from among the Gentiles admitted to ordinances of worship in the sanctuary, and, through the seal of the covenant, incorporated with the believing seed of Abraham. The church of old was taught by the Spirit to pray continually for the conversion and spiritual illumination of the nations; and many bright prophecies distinctly foretold the destruction of idolatry, and the universal spread and triumph of the cause of truth and righteousness. If there was nothing else in the writings of the ancient prophets than this elevated and most expressive ode, it would prove conclusively that what was a special part of the worship of the Jewish tabernacle and temple—what, by Divine prescription, was engrossed in the canon of praise of the Old Testament church—was designed to exhibit that church's true catholic character. The psalm is throughout eminently missionary in spirit, expression, and objects, and far surpasses the most admired of modern missionary hymns.

At the close of a sacramental feast, it deeply concerns us to be in such a spirit of prayer, and to present for ourselves those fervent petitions, with the grand ultimate object before us of the destruction of error and idolatry, and the conversion of all nations to the faith of Christ. We should go down from the mount of communion, after sacred vows, pledged to labour more constantly and devotedly for the spread of the Gospel, and for the universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth. In the opening verses of the psalm we are plainly and impressively taught that, however great and important the blessings asked, they are to be chiefly sought not as terminating in ourselves. They are to be regarded as *means* for a greatly desired *end*. If the Lord, in answer to believing, wrestling prayer, will condescend to be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon

us, all this will be done that through us "His way may be known on the earth," and "His salvation to all nations."

May the Holy Spirit give us now to enjoy these great and excellent blessings, that thus we may become as "polished shafts" in the Divine quiver—prepared, owned, and honoured instruments for doing the work of God in the world! We notice—

I. THE IMPORT OF THE TERMS OF THE PETITION.

The opening words of the psalm are those of united more than of individual prayer. They are the petitions of the whole church, indited by the Spirit, showing us that there are seasons when it specially concerns us to engage ourselves and others to united, earnest pleading about matters of indispensable and transcendent importance. Our Lord teaches us, in His great model prayer, in addressing the Object of prayer, to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," that thus we may recognise at once the filial, fraternal, and heavenly relations, and may pray *with* and *for* others. The first petition in the text may refer to the ancient benediction pronounced at the close of the public worship of the sanctuary (Numbers vi. 24-27), "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." The matters prayed for are sought for the whole church of Christ, and for every separate congregation. They are earnestly desired for the faithful—for all that are brought to the house of God, and that unite together in public and social ordinances. The petitions are offered for blessings of unspeakable value, which are eagerly desired, not only as being excellent and precious to ourselves, but also because our enjoyment of them will be the means of extensive blessing to many others.

The first petition contained in the text is for *Divine*

covenant mercy through Christ. Mercy is favour to the miserable and helpless. This is the source and origin of the whole wondrous plan of human redemption. "Mercy shall be built up for ever." "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Ps. lxxxix. 2; Titus iii. 5.) God shows His mercy by dispensing salvation-blessings freely to the undeserving and perishing. Christ Jesus is Himself the true Mercy-seat, where God meets the children of Israel, and communes with them from between the cherubim. (Exodus xxv. 22.) The first cry of the awakened sinner is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The same petition is most suitable for a child of God in going up to the Lord's table, and in entering the eternal world. We need Divine mercy at every step of life's journey. We will need it unto the last; and our sure and only ground of confidence and hope is, that "God's mercy never fails," and His "grace endures for ever." The mercy which we supplicate is mercy of every kind in the covenant—pardoning, strengthening, comforting, crowning mercy. So full and inexhaustible are the blessings sought and conferred that they are termed "mercies" sure and everlasting. The "sure mercies of David" are guaranteed to them that "incline the ear" and come at the Gospel invitation; and in the covenant-purpose it was promised to "be built up," to endure for ever, while the throne of the Mediator is established to remain unshaken to all generations. (Ps. lxxxix. 1-3.) All that is done for the church is of God's rich and great mercy. All the help, deliverance, and happiness of the redeemed originate in Divine favour to the undeserving and wicked—wondrous in its manifestations, unchangeable and inexhaustible. Feeling our great and constant need, how often should we begin and end all our prayers with the weighty petition, "God be merciful to us!"

We again seek that God would confor upon us *gracious blessings* of all kinds, "and bless us." God's mercy extends

to us in the way of blessing, without which we are nothing. If He *speaks* good, this is tantamount to His *doing* good. Most comprehensive is the petition of the text. It includes the taking away of the curse, and an interest in exceeding great and precious promises. It refers to the whole plan unfolded of the new covenant, which is a cluster of precious, absolute, unconditional promises, securing all Gospel blessings. This forms matter of joyful thanksgiving. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i. 4.) It is the subject of our joyful hope—"God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Ps. lxxvii. 7.) The benefits which Divine mercy confers are all *temporal, spiritual, and eternal* blessings. There is no hindrance to their enjoyment. They are freely offered to the most undeserving and sinful, and may be appropriated without money and without price by the needy and perishing. "There is no want to them that fear the Lord." "They are a blessed people whose God is the Lord."

Jehovah's "*face shines on us*" in the *manifestation of special favour and love*. This is the completion of the blessing. Sinners that were dead and far off are quickened and brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. They are reconciled. The Lord "lifts up His countenance upon them, and gives them peace." They "see His face in righteousness, and are satisfied with his likeness." The beams of God's favour shine upon the righteous. With a pleasant countenance He beholds the upright. His face is the majesty, glory, and beauty of His perfections, especially of His covenant favour and love. It is expressive, too, of His gracious *presence*. The promise given to Moses, in answer to his fervent pleading, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exod. xxxiii. 14), is, in the original, as marked in the margin, "My face shall go with thee." This is fully accomplished in the leading of Christ Jesus, the angel of God's presence. "His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars" (Song v. 15); or, as He

appeared to John in Patmos, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in its strength." (Rev. i. 16.) The shining of God's face is not only the expression of Divine special favour and love, it qualifies for the further enjoyment of enlarged blessing, and brings with it the assurance of gracious acceptance to the end. While we pray, "Make Thy face to shine upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes" (Ps. cxix. 135), "He compasses us with His favour as with a shield. We rejoice in His name all the day, and in His righteousness we are exalted." (Ps. lxxxix. 16.) God loves His people with an unchangeable and everlasting love, and makes them to know that love which passeth knowledge. He fills them with light, purity, and consolation, and enables them to diffuse abroad the savour of His name, for the salvation of the lost and perishing.

The petition is a prayer that we may *ever have fellowship* with Him, deriving from Him *all help and success* in His service. In the Hebrew the petition is, "Cause Thy face to shine *with us, or among us.*" Elsewhere we pray, "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance *among us.*" (Ps. iv. 6.) This is expressive of restored favour and perpetual friendship. In anger the face is averted—it is hidden or covered as with a dark cloud. When the person is pleased and reconciled, it brightens up and shines forth, expressive of benignant love and tender compassion. As the sun rising from the darkness, or bursting forth when it scatters clouds and tempests, smiles on the earth, diffusing light and gladness, so God with us sheds light on our path, fills our hearts with joy and gladness, encourages our endeavours, and crowns our efforts with success. He gives us "the morning star"—the harbinger of the perfect day of glory and blessedness. We walk with God in the light of His countenance. The "candle of the Lord shines upon our head, and by His light we walk through darkness." (Job. xxix. 3.)

These petitions are of the highest importance to us individually. To the whole church they embody and ex-

press all that constitutes her sanctification, comfort, and enlargement, and that makes her a blessing in the earth. Like Daniel, the man "greatly beloved," when we seek deliverance, revival, and enlarged blessings for the church, we give expression to the most fervent desires in such words, "Therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake." (Daniel ix. 17.)

II. CONSIDER HOW THESE REQUESTS ARE FULFILLED, AND THE EVIDENCES.

This is all the doing of the Lord. It is mercy from Him alone that we seek; and He alone can bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. From His presence with us flow these invaluable blessings. The prayer is answered in *pardon bestowed and converting grace given*. Divine mercy originates forgiveness. God blots out sins "for His name's sake." He ever waits to be gracious, and is ready to pardon. After the multitude of His mercies, He forgives freely and fully iniquity, transgression, and sin. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." (Micah vii. 18.) This Divine forgiveness extends to the whole church, and is the first great blessing of salvation enjoyed. There is "forgiveness with God that He may be feared." "With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." "And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Ps. cxxx. 4, 7, 8.) This forgiveness is through the application of the blood of atonement, and is not only full, but brings with it gracious acceptance. (Eph. i. 6, 7.) The sinner forgiven at the same time turns to God. A "new heart" is given him, and a "new spirit" is put within him. He obtains power to become a son of God;

and a right to all the privileges of sonship. These requests are especially granted when, through the plentiful outpouring of the Spirit, multitudes are awakened and converted. "The iniquity of that land is removed in one day." "Thou hast been favourable to Thy land. Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people. Thou hast covered all their sin." "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest Himself shall establish her." (Zech. iii. 9; Ps. lxxxv. 1, 2, 3; lxxxvii. 5.)

The request is granted by working *unity* and *holy fellowship*. It is promised, as the fruit of Divine mercy and favour, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." (Jer. xxxii. 39.) This oneness is union to Christ, the Head, and to one another, as members of His mystical body. He is the living and life-giving Head, and all the saints are by faith united to Him, and in love are members one of another. Of the church invisible—the Spouse—her heavenly Husband, declares, "My Dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her." (Song vi. 9.) This spiritual unity is a main subject of the Redeemer's great priestly prayer—"That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." (John xvii. 21.) The church visible on earth is under the highest obligation to aim at the nearest possible oneness in profession, in spirit, and position, to the church invisible; and this is attained in times of special Divine favour and blessing. Animosities then cease, divisions are healed, and unity in faith and love characterise the fellowship of the church. The Spirit from on high is plentifully poured out; and with increased light and love the breaches of Zion are repaired. Different sections of the church coalesce, not by compromise of prin-

ciple, but by a clearer, fuller apprehension of truth, and the abounding of brotherly love. All true union in the church is the fruit of the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, and the result of gracious revival, and not the cause of the Spirit's descent. Ephraim and Judah become one stick in the Lord's hand in consequence of the Spirit's breath coming from the four winds with power to quicken the dry bones. (Ezek. xxxvii. 17.) The answer of the prayer for grace and blessing will be seen in a holy and loving fellowship in the church. (1 John i. 3.) In sacramental ordinances this communion of saints is realised and displayed. "We being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 16.) This is the grand promised blessing of the last times, when the Messiah's kingdom shall be universally established, and the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh—"The Lord shall be King over all the earth; there shall be one Lord, and His name one." (Zech. xiv. 8.) Real, internal, spiritual unity, which always existed in the church, shall be felt to a much wider extent, and with more constraining influence and power; and oneness of mind and heart, universally prevalent, will attest the power of Christianity, and attract multitudes to submit to the authority of the Redeemer, and to incorporate with His mystical body.

Again—*Fruitfulness* and an *increase of holiness* indicate the answer of the prayer. All life and growth are the certain fruit of the Divine favour and blessing. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." (Ps. xcii. 13.) When the Spirit is plentifully poured out as water on the thirsty, and floods on the dry ground, numerous converts spring up in rank luxuriance, as "among the grass, and as willows by the water courses." (Isa. xlv. 3, 4.) Through the rich and precious dew of Divine favour there is spiritual growth of all kinds; and the fragrance of holy graces and spiritual influence characterise the church thus revived and blessed. (Hosea xiv. 5, 6, 7.) By the Spirit resting on Israel he

grows "as the *lily*," pure, humble, and beautiful; he sends forth roots strong as "the cedars of Lebanon;" wide-spreading and attractive "as the olive;" useful and nourishing he grows "as the corn;" refreshing and reviving "as the vine;" and in the diffusive fragrance of holiness "the scent thereof is as the vine of Lebanon." Through the grace bestowed in answer to prayer, the Christian becomes "fruitful in every good work, and increases in the knowledge of God." (Col. i. 10.) The church, revived by the outpouring of the Spirit, becomes the instrument of her own enlargement. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." (Prov. xi. 30.) The "leaven," spreading and operating *internally*, brings the whole mass under its power. The "grain of mustard seed," diffusing itself *externally*, becomes a wide-spreading tree, sending forth extended branches. Under this law of rapid, vigorous growth, and of increase in holiness, the primitive church speedily spread throughout the nations; and in times yet future—the era of the last powerful effusion of the Spirit—abundant fruitfulness and holiness will be the church's eminent characteristics. "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 16.) Zion shall "put on her beautiful garments, and become the joy of the earth." "As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity: The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness." (Jer. xxxi. 23.)

Fervent, individual, and united prayer. The "Spirit of grace and supplication" poured out is a promised blessing. (Zech. xii. 10.) All gracious benefits are given in answer to prayer. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." (Jer. xxxiii. 3.) "It shall come to pass, before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will

hear." (Isa. lxxv. 24.) Seasons of powerful revival—as the Apostolic age, the era of the Reformation, and subsequent periods of religious awakening—have been distinguished by prayer. (Acts iv. 30.) United, fervent prayer is, in one aspect, the fruit of the effusion of the Spirit, and in another it is the principal means appointed by which the Spirit is sent from on high. Private wrestling prayer, social, in families and in fellowship meetings, and public united prayer, whether stated or on special seasons, are the fruits of blessing to the church, and an ordained means for the enjoyment of greater and more eminent blessing. The disciples, after the Saviour's ascension, gathered together daily in prayer and supplication. The gracious answer was given in the abundant effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, followed by copious showers of blessing. The grace conferred on believers and on the church disposes to prayer. The Spirit helps our infirmities by revealing our wants, dictating our petitions, and filling the mouth with arguments. He enables us to present them aright, and thus makes intercession within us. Prior to the revival of religion, and as the great means of the world's conversion, we are directed to pray—"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Revive Thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy." (Ps. ii. 8; Hab. iii. 2.) In the way of earnest, wrestling prayer, and in answer to fervent pleadings, such as characterised Luther's prayer, and Knox's, when he was accustomed to cry, "Give me Scotland, else I die," the blessing begun is continued and increased. A special token of Divine favour is the plentiful effusion upon the church and on individuals of the Spirit of grace and supplication. Rich and manifold blessings are given, when they are sought in faith and holy desire. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much

more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke xi. 13.)

Enlarged *Christian liberality* and *sustained holy effort* are fruits of grace given and blessing conferred. Liberality in promoting Christ's cause, and in relieving the wants of the destitute, is ever represented in the Scriptures as a "grace" of the Spirit, distinguishing all times of revival and refreshing. "See that ye abound in this grace also." (2 Cor. viii. 7.) When the tabernacle was erected—on the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost—and in subsequent times of enlargement and blessing for the church, a liberal spirit was most conspicuous. Men willingly dedicated worldly substance for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and in promoting the objects of Christian philanthropy. They recognised, as first and paramount, Christ's claim to all they possessed, and in generous self-sacrifice they freely gave what they had to advance His glory in the earth. They thus found that it was "more blessed to give than to receive;" and, as they honoured God with their substance, and with the first-fruits of their increase, their worldly possessions were blessed—"their barns were filled with plenty, and their presses were made to burst with new wine." (Prov. iii. 9, 10.) Inspired prophecy assures us that the future times of the church's glory will be marked by abounding liberality. "And He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." (Ps. lxxii. 15.) "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness." (Isa. lx. 17.) The riches of the Gentiles, the abundance of the sea—treasures hid in the sand—will yet be given to the Redeemer for the establishment of His kingdom of truth and righteousness. Money hitherto misspent on selfish, worldly objects, or lavished on destructive wars, in intoxicating drinks, or to minister to pride, ambition, and

carual pleasures, shall be willingly and largely cast into the Lord's treasury. Wealth employed for its rightful purpose will prove a blessing to its owner, and be subservient to the promotion of ends moral and spiritual of the highest importance. "Thou shalt the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Ver. 6, 7.)

Grace and blessing conferred on the church lead to *rigorous, sustained efforts* for the spread of the Gospel and the world's conversion. Multitudes of prepared instruments are called forth and qualified; and in the spirit of true devotedness they "first give themselves to the Lord," and then to His servants by the will of God, to advance the Divine glory in the earth. Through the abundant effusion of the Spirit in Apostolic times, numerous labourers were prepared and sent forth everywhere preaching the Word, and success crowned their labours. Great multitudes were won to the faith and obedience of the Gospel. The word spread and mightily prevailed. Their "line went into all the earth, their word to the world's end." A like increase of devoted labourers, and the putting forth of consecrated effort, characterised the era of the blessed Reformation. And in the work of modern Christian missions in many fields, converts gathered from the heathen, or out of the bosom of corrupt churches in the South Sea Islands, in Burmah, Madagascar, Japan, and Turkey, numbers, instinct with holy zeal, through the baptism of the Spirit, devote their lives to toil and suffering, to make known God's light and salvation to the ignorant and perishing. The church's latter-day glory—the happy Millennium—will fully exemplify the connection of abundant grace and blessing with enlarged liberality, and concentrated and successful exertion. With greatly increased light and holiness, there will be diligent work and willing suffering. Liberal giving and self-sacrifice will be followed by their appropriate fruits. "The earth

shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii. 14; Isa. lxi. 11.) Finally, *walking in the Spirit*, showing forth its graces, is an eminent fruit of Divine mercy and favour.

III. THE DUTY RESULTING, AND THE HAPPY EFFECTS.

All these are *means* conducing to the accomplishment of a great and important end—God's glory and man's salvation. "That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." This end should be ever kept fully in view, and its attainment resolutely and constantly sought after. In prayer we seek blessings not for ourselves alone. When we address God as "*our Father* in heaven," "we pray *with* and *for* others." The heart, set upon great and glorious objects, seeks that God in all things may be glorified, and His salvation made known to all people.* God's glory is our highest end, and is to be sought above all private concerns. As saved sinners ourselves, we are under obligation to seek the salvation of others. We should rejoice that God has caused His salvation to be known, and exult in the prospect of its being seen to the ends of the earth. Like a devoted minister† speaking of his loved flock, we should regard the personal salvation of each individual to whom we have access as "two salvations to us." Embracing the whole church in our fervent regards, we should pray, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" (Ps. xiv. 7.)

This end is obtained by *earnest prayer for the diffusion of saving light* throughout the earth. The text breathes throughout the spirit of grace and supplication. This is

* The original rendering of the word in the authorised version, "saving health," is taken from an older English translation, and is expressive, as indicating that God's salvation is moral and spiritual healing—the grand remedy for the moral diseases, whether of individuals or of communities.

† Rutherford.

the grand means of blessing; and benefits received in answer to prayer become the motive and encouragement to persevering and importunate petition. The prayer of the ancient church was, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth." It should be ours, too, while we seek that "the face of the covering" that is cast over all people may be destroyed, and that the glory of the Lord may fill the whole earth. Prayer is the first and chief instrumentality for effecting the great and wondrous change. It was the mighty power for turning men from darkness to light in the early days of Christianity; and, resting on the assured word of promise, we know that it will be so in the latter times. Our prayers should be far more frequent, fervent, and united for the spread of the knowledge of salvation, the increase of labourers, and the plentiful outpouring of the Spirit. These rich blessings the Lord has purposed and promised to confer; He withholds them till His people are stirred up to united, wrestling prayer for their bestowal. "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock." (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command ye Me." (Isa. xlv. 11.) Our whole work for making known God's way and salvation in the earth must be prayerful. Every saving discovery made is the answer to earnest pleading at the throne of grace. All progress in making known God's salvation is a motive to redoubled, earnest supplication.

By the *spread of the Bible*, and by *means of a devoted ministry*, God's salvation is made known among the nations. His "way" may be understood as His covenant*—His purpose and mode of dealing with His people,† or His way of truth and holiness—the way to eternal life.‡ In its comprehensive import, it is God's sovereign will in

* Calvin.

† Alexander.

‡ Home.

His gracious designs towards the sons of men. It is the Divine way of justifying the ungodly, of sanctifying the unholy—the “highway of holiness” in which the redeemed walk, and the ransomed of the Lord return and come to Zion in glory. This is made known in the earth only by the revealed word testifying of Christ, Himself “the new and living way”—the only way by which sinners know the Father and come to heaven. The rapid spread of the Bible throughout the nations is opening up a highway through the desert for the heralds of the cross, and for multitudes of the saved, rescued from error and idolatry, to come to Zion. Thus God’s way of life and peace is destined to be universally known. Living missionaries, carrying with them the written word, and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, are the appointed instrumentality for making known to the nations God’s light and salvation. “When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Cor. i. 21.) The church’s great duty is to raise up and send forth multitudes of devoted men to labour for the conversion of the world. She should be earnest in propagating the truth; she should spare no expence in this work; and should, in self-denied sacrifice, willingly separate and set apart her best ministers for this service. Above all, fervent prayers should be offered to the Lord of the harvest that He would “*thrust out*” labourers into His harvest. The effusion of the Spirit upon the church will lead to cheerful consecration. Great will be the multitude of them who publish salvation; and beautiful upon the mountains will be the feet of the messengers of peace. As with angel wing, the heralds of the cross will “fly in the midst of the heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” (Rev. xiv. 6.) In the progress of missions, a *native* ministry will be raised up, and great numbers of the heathen, converted to Christ, will go forth to gather others to Him.

The Jews, made a "willing people in a day of power," will be devoted and successful missionaries of the cross; and thus by the light of the word, and the power of the Gospel widely proclaimed, God's way of truth and holiness will be universally known.

Great multitudes of sinners are saved. This is the grand object of devoted effort, and a principal matter of the church's prayers. God's way is known on the earth when His salvation is enjoyed by great numbers throughout the nations. This is salvation by grace—salvation in Christ—God's great and everlasting salvation. When the grace sought shall have been bestowed, the number of the saved will no longer be few, as berries on the tops of the uttermost boughs, but will be a multitude in the earth. Nations shall be born in a day. The church revived, lengthening her cords, and stretching forth the curtains of her habitation, shall exclaim in wonder, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest." (Isa. lx. 8; Heb. viii. 11.)

All nations shall be *brought into professed subjection to the Redeemer*, and this shall be *followed by blessed effects* to the whole world. The enthroned Mediator, putting down all opposing power, will assert His right to reign, and will claim for His covenanted inheritance all nations of the earth. To Messiah, the Prince, all kindreds of the people shall render homage—all kings shall honour and serve Him. The sceptre and diadems of earth shall be prostrate at His feet. Nations shall bring their riches and glory to Zion. The gates of the city of God shall be opened, that "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth" may enter in. Peace and outward prosperity, as the fruit of saving knowledge, and the effect of Messiah's benign rule, shall be all-prevalent and universal. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all nations shall see it together."

"All the earth shall worship Thee, and shall sing unto Thee; they shall sing unto Thy name." (Isa. xl. 5; Ps. lxvi. 4.)

IN CONCLUSION.

This subject calls us to consider—

The *necessity and importance of these blessings to ourselves*, and urges us to *seek them earnestly in prayer*. As we are guilty, sinful, and helpless, an interest in Divine mercy and grace is indispensable for our personal salvation. Our pardon and peace; our strength, holiness, and comfort; our victory and happiness, flow wholly from the grace of the covenant; and we are absolutely dependent on the Spirit to reveal and impart them. It is God that "worketh in us, both to will and do of His good pleasure." We have the highest encouragement to seek all spiritual blessings in Christ. He has power on earth to forgive sins. He is ever "waiting to be gracious," and is "ready to pardon." He can cause His face to shine on the sanctuary even when desolate, and He blesses His servants with peace. We should ask spiritual, saving blessings for others as well as for ourselves. All true prayer is social and intercessory, as it is heart-felt and importunate. We are taught, when we pray, to make "prayer and supplication for all saints," and to seek that men may be blessed in Christ, and may call Him blessed. The possession of Divine mercy and grace is absolutely required to dispose and enable us to make known God's light and salvation to others, and to render us instrumental in the conversion of the nations. Until we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, we can neither estimate aright the sad condition of perishing sinners, nor labour in faith and prayer for their salvation. Though the Gospel may be proclaimed by those who have not themselves experienced its saving power, and God may make efficacious His own word for quickening and converting some, even when those who preach it remain unawakened, yet an abundant spiritual blessing is

only found in connection with the work of those who know the truth in the love and power of it—of those “who believe, and therefore speak.” The church, too, in order to fulfil her mission in the world, must seek an enlarged measure of grace upon her ministers and members, and a rich spiritual blessing upon the administration of her ordinances. When, as in the Thessalonian church, the word comes, “not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,” then the Gospel is “sounded out to all the region round about,” and in every place the faith of the church toward God is “spread abroad.” Men are turned from idols to serve the living and true God. And the church, the centre of light, is seen and acknowledged as the successful instrument of dispelling the world’s darkness, and of irradiating with the beams of Immanuel’s glory the nations of the earth.

It behoves us to *lay to heart our obligations to make known God’s way and salvation to all people.* These are manifold and most weighty. Our calling, profession, and sacred vows, the multiplied and high privileges which we enjoy, the fearful condition of the world apostate from God and lying in the wicked one, and the glory that will redound to Christ when the nations are brought into subjection to His sceptre of righteousness—all form powerful and constraining motives to impel us to pray and labour for the world’s conversion. Here is the test of the genuineness of our Christian profession and of the sincerity of our prayers. When we place the concerns of Christ’s glory far above any private interests of our own; when we ask in prayer that His kingdom may come, and His will be done universally on earth as in heaven, before we seek temporal and spiritual blessings for ourselves; and when we accompany our prayers with self-denied and sustained efforts, then do we give evidence that we are actuated by the mind of Christ—that we are engaged in a work in which He delights; and then we have the assurance that our labours shall not be in vain in the Lord. There is

a necessary and inseparable connection between being spiritually enlightened and arising to shine for the diffusion of the light. This, too, is the appointed way of receiving enlarged blessing, and of communicating it to others. No congregation or church may expect to be blessed that is not aggressive and missionary in spirit and work. In connection with ardent zeal and devoted effort for the universal diffusion of the church's light and privileges, there are guaranteed in the Divine promises manifold enlargement and blessing. "The Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Multitudes of converts shall crowd the courts of Zion, enemies shall feign submission, and men, in admiration, shall call her "the city of the Lord; the Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

It concerns us, especially at the present time, to seek these great blessings *as means to an important end*. The world is to receive from the church the knowledge of the truth and all the blessings of salvation. It is now looking to her for deliverance from innumerable evils, and for light, healing, and peace. The Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us!" is loudly addressed to us from many lands, and Christians everywhere are laid under solemn obligations to respond to it. Nations are perishing from not knowing God's way and salvation. There is no healing balm elsewhere for their numerous and deep-seated maladies. Those who know a Divinely-provided cure are deeply criminal if they fail to seek its application. The work must begin in the church, if it would go forward successfully throughout the earth, and be effectual for enlightening those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and for bringing the nations to willing subjection to the sceptre of Immanuel. The Spirit is the promised Agent to give all light and quickening—to make known and apply God's salvation. It deeply concerns the church to pray for the plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon its

members and on all its administrations. The revival of the Lord's work, quickening the dry bones, exciting and strengthening holy graces, and impelling to sustained holy exertion, is the first and great thing required for the world's conversion. The mountain of the Lord's house shall be "established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills," and all nations shall flow into it, soon as the promised universal effusion of the Spirit shall come. The "living waters," rising in the sanctuary, shall "go forth from Jerusalem," "half of them toward the former sea," to pervade the marts of commerce and sanctify the world's business, and "half of them toward the hinder sea," to purify the stagnant mass of corruption; in summer and in winter it shall be." (Zech. xiv. 5.) Thus, according to sacred prediction, nations converted through the prayers and self-denied exertions of the church, "bring their riches and glory to Zion." Many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." In view of this joyful prospect, and to hasten this blessed consummation, let us arise and shine in the beauty of holiness. Exerting and encouraging one another, let us say, "O house of Jacob, come ye, let us walk in the light of the living." (Isa. ii. 3-5.)

Finally—The bright prospect of a revived church, and of the universal triumph of true religion in the earth, *inspires the most joyful hopes*. The last effusion of the Spirit will be more wide-spread and powerful than any that have preceded it. The "Spirit and breath" coming from the four winds, and sweeping across the valley of vision, quickens the bones—"very many and very dry"—and causes them to stand up "an exceeding great army," equipped for warfare, and prepared for victory. The church, purified from error and corruption, and her

manifold breaches healed, shall appear "beautiful for situation," "the joy of the whole earth." (Ps. xlviii. 2.) The truth, rapidly and universally diffused, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, shall achieve its glorious last victories. Multitudes of instruments, prepared as "polished shafts" in the Divine quiver, shall go forth throughout the nations to proclaim to the ends of the earth God's salvation, and to claim the homage of all people to Prince Messiah. Then shall He take to Him His great power to reign. He shall put down all opposing authority to rule, and come whose right it is, and it shall be given Him. The idols shall be utterly abolished, and the kingdom of graven images destroyed. The Redeemer's glory shall fill the whole earth. Then shall great voices from heaven proclaim—"Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xi. 15.)

THE BELOVED GONE DOWN TO HIS GARDEN AND THE BEDS OF SPICES.

Song or SOLOMON vi. 1, 2—"Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy Beloved turned aside? that we may seek Him with thee. My Beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."

A PRINCIPAL object in coming to sealing ordinances is to realise the gracious presence of Christ, and to obtain spiritual views of His glory. Saints and servants of God in all ages have had this as their uppermost desire, and were satisfied with nothing else. They speak often to fellow-travellers to Zion on these subjects, and make frequent earnest inquiries concerning them. They address themselves to the Watchman—"Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" They commune with their own spirits, and speak to God in deep searchings of heart and with fervent desire. "O that I knew where I might find Him. I would come even to His seat." "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." "We would see Jesus." Our fathers, as they went up to holy ordinances, and came down from the hill of God, had solemn communings of heart on such themes; and they left behind them their recorded testimony that they found the Beloved of their souls in the ordinances of His grace; or they were deeply humbled and penitent if He had withdrawn Himself and was gone.

In these verses we have a striking and beautiful example of such inquiry after the presence of the Master of assemblies, accompanied with directions, plain, pointed, and most suitable, showing how the object of longing desire may be realised. The speakers, in the opening words of the

chapter, are obviously the "Daughters of Jerusalem"—the same who are mentioned in verses 8th and 9th of the preceding chapter. These may be regarded as nominal professors, or young converts, or believers, weak and unestablished. They address to the spouse, the church of the First-Born, a question twice repeated—"Whither is thy Beloved gone? whither is thy Beloved turned aside?" In reply to the spouse's solemn charge—"If you find my Beloved, I charge you that you tell Him that I am sick of love," they had asked before—"What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" They were then surprised at the spouse's anxious, restless inquiry after her Beloved, and at the message so solemnly enjoined them to convey to Him respecting her ardent, overcoming affection. Now the inquiry is made with an observable and remarkable difference. This arises from hearing the lively, endearing description which had been given of the Beloved. Throughout it is indeed an elevated and glowing commendation. Her thoughts and affections are absorbed in setting forth the grace and dignity of His matchless person and character. She labours for words to declare adequately His surpassing beauty and excellency; and at last she exclaims with fervour of heart, as she approaches this Matchless One, and triumphs in her personal relation to Him, "Yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved and my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." Impressed with the vivid description, and with this outflow of ardent affection, expressed in terms so lofty, the hearers no longer ask, "What is thy Beloved more than another?" but, as if now persuaded that there is none to be compared with Him for beauty and the most attractive qualities, they express earnest desires to know where He is to be found, that they may have personal acquaintance with Him. They purpose to unite with experienced believers in seeking Him as the chief and sole object of heart-felt affection and desire. In this spirit should we come to the ordinance:

and in the same way should we be prepared to answer their earnest inquiry. Above all, we should be concerned to meet with the Beloved in the ordinances of His house, that we may know His saving work on ourselves and others. First of all we notice what is indicated in—

I. THE REPEATED INQUIRY.

The language of wrapt admiration and fervent affection which they had heard excites the inquirers to thirst for acquaintance and intimate communion with One so transcendently lovely and excellent. Thus are we taught *the benefit of spiritual intercourse and fellowship*. The inquiry is the effect of serious spiritual discourse; it arises from the full and clear answer to the question concerning the excellency of the Beloved. Such converse on spiritual themes has ever been a means of instruction and blessing. The weak should not shun questions for edification. They should speak in tones respectful, and, as here, on a subject weighty and affecting. The inquiry is about Christ, the Well-beloved; and the believer's spiritual relation to Him, and his personal acquaintance with Him. The answer is given readily, in grave, suitable, and affecting terms. The heart is enlarged, and the tongue becomes as the pen of a ready writer, when it speaks the things of the King. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" is answered by giving to every one a reason of the hope that is in us. In the one case and the other mention is made of personal interest—"What is thy Beloved?" "My Beloved"—first and emphatically named—"is white and ruddy," incomparably beautiful, "the chiefest among ten thousand." Such spiritual converse concerning Christ and His relation to His saints is an approved means of leading persons to serious inquiry and holy fellowship.

The twofold inquiry expresses *the highest esteem for God's saints*. They are designated "The fairest among women"—surpassingly beautiful and comely. The question put to the spouse in chapter v. 9 is repeated here, with

redoubled emphasis. It is declarative of continued and high respect. A true mark of saintship is to esteem believers the dearest and best on earth. "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him." "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love His brother also." (1 John v. 1 ; iv. 21.) Saints on earth, notwithstanding their imperfection and sin, are regarded as "the excellent," in whom are centred "all the delights" of fellow-saints. Their spiritual beauty is discerned in the image of Christ formed within them; and as they are made comely with His comeliness put upon them, even with many spots still adhering to them, they see and admire in them likeness to Christ, and hence they desire to be with them and like them. Like the young Moabitess, as they cleave to them in love, they declare, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

The burden of the inquiry is an *earnest asking where the Beloved is known and to be met with*. Where there is any proper conviction of *what* Christ is, the main inquiry will be to know *where He is*, and *how to obtain a personal interest in Him*, and enjoy spiritual communion with Him. This is as necessary for growth in holiness and spiritual comfort as to know what He is. There may be much remaining ignorance even when He is acknowledged. There may be an honest desire and love to Christ, when yet one may fear to claim a personal interest in Him. The inquirers, in putting the question, do not say, "Our Beloved," but "Thy Beloved." As yet they are eagerly seeking after Him, while yet they do not feel the assurance of personal interest in Him. The great business of true religion is to "follow on to know the Lord," while resting on the assurance that thus we shall know Him. The inquiry is not from mere curiosity, but from conviction of His excellency and the eager desire of His company.

It expresses, moreover, a *right motive* and a *holy purpose*. The knowledge desired is to be conjoined with

consistent practice. The motive that impels to eager inquiry and ardent pursuit is mighty and constraining. Finding Christ as our Beloved and Friend is the great end of all religious duties. We come at once under a personal obligation and express a fixed resolution—“*We will seek Him.*” It is a singular and decided purpose. Forgetting all other things, and turning away from other objects, we “pant after God, the living God,” and count all else “but loss and dung,” compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. This alone is the right frame of spirit in seeking the Beloved. Thus are we prepared for an answer of peace.

The inquiry implies a pledge to *union and communion* in seeking the Beloved. “*We will seek Him with thee.*” In the opening of the Song of Solomon the believer expresses a purpose of fellowship with others—in active service—“Draw me; we will run after thee.” Discoveries of Christ will constrain to run with others in all holy obedience. As saints are given a heart to know, love, and fear Him, they become closely joined with one another. United to the Head, they enjoy the nearest spiritual communion in the mystical body. They are members one of another—bound together by the tenderest and strongest ties; one in affection and sympathy, and identified in interest and pursuit. They are thus helped to seek the Beloved more earnestly, and enabled the better to find Him. If we come aright to inquire after Christ, we give the pledge that if He is made known, we will take a common lot with His people—uniting with them in the same acts of spiritual worship, and in all the work of religion. And as we impart the knowledge of Christ to others, we rejoice that numbers will thereby be brought to holy fellowship in duty and privilege. True religion is eminently social. Commending Christ in words of grace, and by the obedience of the life, we attract others to join themselves to the Lord. “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” “The inhabitants of

one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also." (Zech. viii. 21, 23.)

II. THE ANSWER IN RELATION TO THE PLACE.

The inquiry is promptly met. The spouse speaks without hesitation—from the fulness of the heart, in assured certainty of knowledge and experience. "My Beloved is gone down to His garden, to the beds of spices." She *avouches Him as wholly hers*, and readily answers. In no cold terms does she speak concerning Him, nor is she satisfied with general terms in commending His excellency. Exultingly she confesses Him before men, and glories in using the language of loving appropriation: "This is my Beloved and Friend." He is altogether mine, in gracious offer and rich free gift; and I am wholly His, in willing choice and cheerful self-surrender. "We love Him, because He first loved us." The soul, attracted by the Saviour lifted up, sees matchless perfections and all lovable qualities in Him. Saints yield their hearts to Him, and He is ever their only Beloved. The best advice they give to others in their darkness and doubts and difficulties is to avouch their own interest in Christ, and their personal fellowship with Him. Thus readily it behoves us to answer those who desire a reason of the faith and hope that is in us. We should always be prepared to welcome inquirers—to clear their doubts and solve their difficulties. We should rejoice in being called to tell what the Beloved is to us, and to profess our personal interest in Him. Fellowship with Him in service and privilege should be with us matter of heart-felt experience; and we should hail with delight the opportunity of professing it, that others may be drawn to know and enjoy it.

His church is His garden—the place to which the Beloved *is gone*, and whither He *is turned aside*. Thus is the church already beautifully described, Song iv. 12—

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." It is a chosen, separated, enclosed place, which the Beloved frequents—in which He reposes with delight in intercourse with His people. He has carefully planted, guarded, and fenced it; under His constant cultivation it yields precious fruits for nourishment and refreshment, which are to Him an honour and glory. Hither the Beloved has gone down, and turned aside, as His favourite abode. The church is often in a low condition, like a city besieged, or a watchman's lodge in a garden of cucumbers. In wondrous condescension her Husband and Head shares His people's afflictions and trials, and is with them when they are weak and oppressed. He is the "Man amid the myrtle trees in the low bottom" (Zech. i. 8), to whom ministering spirits report providential movements, and on whose commands they wait in their service. He is found in the humble assemblies of His people, as with the women retired from Philippi for prayer at the river side. With two or three met in His name, in the lowest circumstances, He is present. In the words of a suffering Covenanted witness: * "Five or six praying persons, by a dike side, are the Church of Scotland, in which the King dwells as a wall of fire, and the glory in the midst." Our fathers, in the days of sorest trial, found Him as the Beloved of their souls, and enjoyed near and sweet fellowship with Him. And here inquirers are always to be directed as the chosen place of loving intercourse and blessing. If we would know where the Good Shepherd "feeds and makes His flocks to rest at noon," we must "go forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed the kids by the Shepherd's tents," even though mean and pitched in the wilderness.

The Beloved is especially to be found in those parts of the church, and in those *ordinances where His chosen saints are gathered and the fruits of holy graces abound.* He

* Alexander Peden.

has gone down and turned aside to "*the beds of spices.*" There are selected spots in the garden, where are lovely flowers, and the fragrance of aromatic herbs flows forth. There are some sections of the church which above others may be likened to these beds of spices, as they manifest the love and power of the truth professed, and abound in the graces of the Spirit and in self-denying labours. There are praying societies and families in the same congregation, where the life of religion is felt and known, where grace in lively exercise sanctifies every relation, sweetens all intercourse, and ever attracts and refreshes. There Jesus delights to turn aside and rest, rejoicing in the work of His hands, drawing forth and accepting the fruits of His grace. These spices do not flourish in every part of the garden, but in spots selected and prepared by peculiar wisdom and love—arranged in goodly order, and cared for by the skill of the Divine Owner. Beautiful and comely to the eye, they regale the other senses. Placed in near contact, and separated from all that is unsightly and noxious, they refresh and regale one another. Where companies of true, loving, and lively believers abound, there the Beloved stays as in a rest desired, and thither saints are attracted. Such places He chooses for His loved abode, and the believer greatly desires to be with Him in those beds of spices. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." (Song iv. 6.) Christ's presence is realised where spicy herbs intermingled show their beauty and diffuse their fragrance. There the devout inquirer attracted desires earnestly to enjoy the nearest and most loving communion. "Make haste, my Beloved, and be Thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." (Song viii. 14.)

This presence of the Beloved is sought and found in the way of *Divinely-appointed means*. He is ever in His church and in the lively societies of His people. We must not, as some do, go out of the church, or forsake the

assembling of ourselves together, or follow after novelties, if we would find Him. We are commanded to "stand in the way and see," and "ask for the good old way," and "walk therein," and it is promised, "Ye shall find rest to your souls." (Jer. vi. 16.) He is to be sought and found where others have realised His presence, and known the sweetness of communion with Him. He delights in the ordinances of the church. His visits of love are made where the graces of the Spirit are implanted and drawn forth. As He sends "the plentiful rain" of the Spirit, whereby "He confirms His inheritance when weary," His "congregation dwells there" with satisfaction and delight, and "of His goodness He prepares for the poor." (Ps. lxxviii. 9, 10.)

The Beloved comes to His garden and the beds of spices that He may *accept* the graces of His saints, and *invigorate and diffuse* them. The church is the object of His tenderest love, and of His unceasing care. Its true members are the trees of His planting, that He may be glorified. The fruits for which He ever looks, and with which He is satisfied, are the graces of His Spirit; all His care is that these may be rich and abundant. He walks amid the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in His right hand. The light borrowed from Himself irradiates His ministers; and, reflected from them and the church, it is diffused abroad, dispelling the darkness of error and sin, and making known the glory of His name. He is in His garden, and among the beds of spices, to direct and prosper the cultivation—Himself being a "fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." He is the Source of all the fertility of the church, and her constant Guardian and Protector. "A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. xxvii. 3.) The gracious presence of the Beloved in the assemblies of His saints causes all their comfort and blessing, and renders them over attractive.

The gales of the Spirit, stirring up and diffusing their graces, are the suitable preparation for His visits of love, as the out-flow of these graces in their effects upon others is the blessed result of His familiar intercourse and friendship.

III. HIS WORK THERE.

This is declared in a twofold expression. The Beloved has gone down into His garden, and is "turned aside," attracted to the beds of spices; (1) To "*feed in the gardens*," and (2) "*To gather lilies*." Where His gracious presence is enjoyed, and He is with His people, accepting and rendering diffusive their graces, He is always engaged in these eminent works.

These "*gardens*" are *particular congregations and social assemblies* of His people. The mode of expression is varied in the last part of the answer. It is "*the gardens*," instead of "His garden," in which He feeds. The singular, "garden," that which the Beloved owns as peculiarly His, is the whole church, chosen in His love, purchased by His blood—sanctified by His Spirit, His rest and dwelling place. These "*gardens*" are not separate places, but plots or divisions in the same enclosure. As under the law there were synagogues for instruction and social worship, as well as a national temple, so there are particular churches and local assemblies forming one body under the same exalted Head. Besides the whole church to which He comes down, the King of Zion erects particular societies, appoints to them ordinances in which He presides, and on which He commands the blessing, as "the dew that descends upon Hermon." Some of these are distinguished above others, as Philadelphia, Rome, and Thessalonica, to which the word comes "with power in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," and from which it is "sounded forth to all the regions round about." While the gracious presence of the Beloved is not tied to any one place, He has promised to be present to bless whenever

His name is recorded with His saints, however few and despised. His tabernacle is with men, and there He meets with the children of Israel, to bless them. His care over His saints is minute and particular. Ordinances are the pasture-grounds to which He leads His flock. While He is sovereign, manifesting Himself as He sees good, He regards each separate assembly met in His name to worship and honour him as a garden of pleasure and delight. Though some are privileged above others, He can be present in them all at the same time, and His work of power and love is the same wherever He turns aside to manifest His glory. Himself *feeds* in these gardens with delight. The phrase, "to feed in the gardens," may be used *passively*. He feeds on the provision made for His entertainment. In chapter v. 1, He declares—"I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey." As the proprietors of rich gardens refresh themselves with mellow and pleasant fruits, so the Beloved has pleasure in His saints. He accepts and is satisfied with the graces of their character, and with their spiritual services. To those who open to Him as He stands at the door and knocks, He promises more familiar intercourse and mutual enjoyment. "I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. iii. 20.) While the Saviour condescends to receive refreshment from communion with His saints, our grand duty is to provide suitable entertainment for this Divine Guest. As we welcome Him with spiritual desire and affection, we should spread a table for Him, and invite Him into the mother's house. "I would cause thee to drink of the spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." (Song viii. 2.)

He administers *soul-nourishing food* to His people. This is His feeding *actively*. In places where He makes His sheep to rest at noon, He feeds His flock like a shepherd. Ordinances blessed with His presence are His pleasant pastures. The table which He prepares lies loaded with royal dainties. The promises of the covenant—exceeding

great and precious—are bread of heaven to nourish the soul to life eternal. Himself is the “hidden manna”—the true bread that comes down from heaven. His “flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.” The feast of fat things “for all nations” is prepared in “the mountain of the Lord’s house.” In the free invitations of the Gospel, all are called and bid welcome to come and partake of the plentiful provision. The food of Zion is blessed, as the Beloved dispenses it to the needy and perishing, and gives it to the weak and hungry for nourishment and comfort. He feeds, by imparting an appetite and relish for spiritual bread. As they open their mouth, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, He satisfies them with the goodness of His house, even of His holy temple. “He giveth meat to them that fear Him; and He is ever mindful of His covenant.” All their wants He supplies; all their spiritual desires He satisfies. With food convenient He nourishes and strengthens them, till are brought to the full feast in glory, where they eat they and drink with Him at His table in His heavenly kingdom.

He goes down to His garden to collect *converts* and to *gather saints near to Himself*. This is His chief work in the church, and that which gives evidence of His presence and power. As a person delighting in his garden collects the choicest flowers and the most precious fruits, so Christ comes into the garden and the beds of spices for a like purpose. The lilies which He gathers are His saints and their graces. He calls and separates them from the world lying in wickedness. He effectually calls them. Constrained by His love, they come out and are separate. They become the sons of God, and are gathered together with the all things in heaven and earth that are one in Christ the Head. (Eph. i. 10). They are brought to Shiloh, to whom the “expectation of the people” shall come. In tender compassion, He brings them under the shadow of His love and protection, as a “lion gathers her

brood under her wings." Ever as He feeds in holy ordinances, He gathers sinners to Himself. He changes their nature, and renews them in holiness. Those whom He converts are brought into His family, to enjoy its fellowship and share its privileges, and never again to be cast out of the inheritance of sons. A chief object of the Beloved coming to spiritual ordinances is to "gather together the children of God that are scattered abroad." (Matt. xxiii. 37.) His special invitation calls them to come to Himself to enjoy the highest privilege and blessing. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge Himself." (Ps. l. 5, 6.) If we seek the Beloved, and go whither He is turned aside, we shall rejoice in His work of converting sinners and of building up saints; and our earnest desire will be to be among the lilies gathered.

Finally—He comes to the garden to prepare and *gather lilies as garlands for glory*. His presence in the beds of spices looks forward to the final and full gathering. Saints are nourished up to life eternal; graces are excited and made to flow forth, that they may be perfected. The Captain of Salvation, made perfect through sufferings, is ever about the work of bringing "many sons to glory." (Heb. ii. 10.) At times the Beloved comes into His garden to pluck beautiful flowers and transplant them to bloom in Paradise. Death is His messenger to remove saints that are ripened for heaven. "Every gem that death rudely tears away from us here is a glorious jewel for ever shining there."* These lilies gathered from the church on earth are entwined as a garland of victory and honour. As trophies of His love, they will hereafter flourish on His head, showing His matchless beauty and reflecting His glory for ever. No longer among the "thorns" that wounded them and marred their comeliness,

* Jonathan Edwards.

when gathered home they shine with surpassing lustre—all fair—in perfect resemblance to Him who has gathered them—"the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley"—
"altogether lovely."

IN CONCLUSION.

This subject calls to solemn *self-trial*. Have you come hither to make for yourselves this twofold inquiry? Have you been led to seek with desire after the Beloved, that you may know where He is to be found? Have you heard with interest the commendation of His saints concerning Him? Do you esteem them "the excellent of the earth," and in moral and spiritual beauty the fairest of creatures? As deeply interested and earnestly concerned, do you push the inquiry, undervaluing all else, and resolved to be satisfied with nothing till it is answered? What is your purpose in asking so eagerly after the Beloved? Is it that you may join yourselves to the Lord's people; to engage with them in the same duties, and to share with them the high privilege of fellowship with the Beloved? It behoves you now to search diligently what are your motives and spirit in coming to the ordinance, that we may give an answer to Him who sends us, and that you may receive encouragement and strong consolation.

It concerns us to be prepared to *give freely, as the spouse, the answer to the inquiry* respecting the Beloved. We should know by experience where He is, and the special work in which He is engaged. We should be able to commend Him as our best and only Beloved. We should speak as those who have been with Him in scenes of holy communion. Saints have been gathered into His garden—they are themselves "the beds of spices." Chosen, enclosed, and cultivated, they grow up to manifest His peculiar favour, to reflect His beauty, and to diffuse abroad the fragrance of His grace. While He feeds them with the provision of His love, they present to Him the offerings which He accepts, and share mutual communion

with Him. Young converts and weak believers, inquiring after the haunts and work there of the Beloved, have a right to expect from you an answer of the hope that is in you. You should be ready to give it as a matter of conscious experience. You should be able to declare to others, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth." (Ps. lxvi. 16; Song iii. 4.) How great the privilege to be able to instruct inquirers where the Beloved is to be certainly found, that they may be drawn to loving acquaintance with Him, and to communion with His saints!

The subject offers the fullest welcome *to meet with the Beloved in the gardens and beds of spices—to see and share in His gracious work there.* The answer of saints who have experienced the faithfulness of His promise and the power of His grace—His own rest and delight in holy ordinances, and the gales of the Spirit blowing on the garden, and spreading abroad the savour of His name—all concur in pressing the invitation:—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And whosoever will, is welcome to come and take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) He has gone before to the high place of communion: He blesses the sacrifice, and they eat that are bidden. He is surely to be found where saints meet in His name—in the assemblies of His people and the ordinances of His institution. He delights to be where the graces which He has implanted are like aromatic herbs—as fragrant flowers. If you truly desire to meet with Him, and to behold His glory, He is ready to receive you. He waits to be gracious. That is still His honour, what in the days of His flesh was esteemed His reproach, "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." He is in His church to give food to the hungry, and to satisfy with the bread of life the destitute and perishing. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." "Open thy

mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Ps. cxvii. 9; lxxxix. 10.) While He supplies every soul-want, and satisfies every spiritual desire, He has mutual communion with His saints. He sups with them, and they with Him. He sees the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. If you come to meet Him in the garden, and to behold His condescension as He turns aside to the beds of spices, He will share with you the feast of His love, accept your persons, and take as a savour of rest the tribute of your graces and the offering of your holy services. Higher privileges than these you cannot enjoy on earth, and as you go where Christ is found by His saints, to seek Him with them, you have all encouragement from His assured promise, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

As the result of seeking and finding the Beloved in His garden, you will take an interest in His work of converting sinners—of bringing His saints nearer to Himself, and of preparing and taking home His redeemed to glory. This is His great work in the earth—that which eminently displays His glory, and which blesses abundantly His church. As you see Him gathering lilies, delivering sinners from the world, and exhibiting the saved as trophies of His love, you will rejoice in His power and mercy, and be glad in His salvation. Your own evidences of union to the Redeemer will become clearer. You will be stimulated to labour and pray for the conversion of sinners, and to joy in the prospect of the gathering together of all things both in heaven and earth in one in Christ the Head, even in Him. While we behold Him engaged in this great work, we are led to yield ourselves as instruments to carry it forward, and to regard it as matter of absorbing interest and fervent prayer. "Revive Thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; remember mercy." "Let Thy work appear unto Thy ser-

vants, and Thy glory unto their children." (Hab. iii. 2: Ps. xc. 16.)

Finally—We should prepare for the *final gathering* to which all meetings and ordinances on earth look forward. The Lord chooses and separates a garden here, that He may gather into it the ransomed from the earth, and prepare them for the heavenly paradise. He comes down to it to give them glimpses of His glory, and to have communion with His saints, as the foretaste of the marriage-supper of the Lamb in the Father's house in heaven. All the gathering here to Mount Zion, and to the feast prepared for all nations, has respect to the receiving of the redeemed to future bliss, and to the full fellowship with God and saints made perfect, which forms the substance of heavenly felicity. The privileges of the sanctuary on earth are designed to lead away our thoughts and affections to things above, and to be to us earnestness of their full and everlasting enjoyment. If we have found Christ, as the Beloved of our souls, in the ordinances of His grace, and shared in His work of feeding and gathering, it is but a little time and we shall be taken to be with Him in glory, as lilies gathered—the trophies of His love—to behold and reflect His beauty, to be to Him an honour and praise throughout eternity.

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

ZECHARIAH xiv. 6, 7—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

ZECHARIAH, who uttered, as the organ of the Divine Spirit, the remarkable predictions recorded in this chapter, has been styled "The sun among the minor prophets." In conjunction with Haggai, he was commissioned, in a time of special trial and emergency, to encourage and animate the returned Jewish captives, under Joshua and Zerubbabel; to rebuild the temple, and to re-establish, according to the Divine pattern, the worship of the sanctuary. The messages which he spake, although meant for direction and comfort to those who were engaged in an arduous undertaking, had a designed higher reference to the glory of a distant future. The immediate deliverance and enlargement pointed to the bright era of the promised Messiah, which, from the earliest period of revelation, had been the joy-inspiring hope of the church, and to the full establishment of the reign of righteousness in the earth. Zechariah, who is referred to by our Lord Himself as a martyr-witness (Matt. xxiii. 35), spoke of the Saviour to come, of the fulness and excellency of His salvation, of the glory of the latter times, the triumph of truth, and the universal establishment of the mediatorial kingdom in the earth.

The visions and predictions of the last chapters of this prophecy have an evident pointed reference to the person and work of the incarnate Redeemer, the state of the

world, and the condition and fortunes of the church towards the close of the dispensation. He is seen lifted up as the "Pierced One," to whom men look by faith and penitence for salvation. (xii. 10.) In His atoning death, He is "the Fountain opened"—the full, free, and inexhaustible source of all blessing. The "sword" of Divine justice is commanded to awake and smite the man—Jehovah's Fellow, that God's hand of power and favour might be turned upon the "little ones"—the weak and helpless of His ransomed people. Then, in the closing verse of the preceding chapter, there is declared, in vivid and expressive terms, the Divine severity, in the rejection of the Jews, and their fearful punishment by the Roman invasion; and, at the same time, God's distinguishing goodness in saving a remnant even in the day of threatened vengeance. This is still God's strange work in times of judgment in the earth. The larger part—the unbelieving and impenitent—are given up as victims of destruction. The "one-third" left—brought through the fire—is refined as silver, and tried as gold is tried; they become eminently prayerful; they are owned and blessed as God's peculiar treasure, and they enter anew into solemn covenant-engagements to be the Lord's. "They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (xiii. 9.)

The opening verses of this chapter declare God's work of vengeance against a people high in privilege, but become backsliding and rebellious. They refer, in the first instance, to the work of the Roman conquerors in besieging Jerusalem, and in subverting the national Jewish polity; but they point forward to national calamities and to trials of the church through successive ages and in times yet future. But as Scripture prophecy has "a germinant and springing accomplishment,"* these predictions declare that

the instruments of vengeance would themselves in turn be punished. Jehovah Himself would "go forth to fight against those nations" that come against Jerusalem, "as when He fought in the day of battle." When "the rod of His anger and the staff of His indignation" had served its purpose, in chastising a guilty nation, it would be broken and destroyed. It has been remarked that the Romans never had the like success in their foreign wars, as they formerly had, from the time that they became the executors of God's wrath upon the Jewish people. Thus it is foretold it will be in the eras of judgment and deliverance for the church, which serve to disclose the Divine purpose. In the words of a graphic and strongly figurative representation, Jehovah is said, when He goes forth to smite rebellious nations, to "stand upon Mount Olivet, which is before Jerusalem in the east," and the mount "cleaves together in the midst," so as to cause "a very great valley." A way is thus suddenly prepared for the escape of Israel; and they "flee to the valley of mountains, which shall reach to Azal," a separate place, "like as men fled in the days of the earthquake." This does not refer to the Saviour's ascension to heaven from the Mount of Olives, nor to His personal coming and appearing in Jerusalem at the commencement of the Millennium; nor are the parting of the mountain and the flight to Azal an emblematical representation of the passing away of the ceremonial law, as such an application is rejected by received principles of Scripture interpretation. Having regard to the immediate context, the description may refer to the escape from Jerusalem, which the Christians, forewarned by our Lord, made shortly before the commencement of the Roman siege. A way was opened suddenly for their departure; and this is figuratively depicted as the cleaving asunder of the mountain, and the opening up of a "very great valley." Beholding the threatened vengeance approaching, they fled in haste. Mount Olivet lay on their way of retreat, and they continued their flight till they reached Pella, beyond

Jordan—a separate and secure place, remote from the scene of destruction. The deliverance thus wrought for the primitive Christians was an instance and emblem of future Divine interpositions in behalf of the church in subsequent times, until the period of her future glorious enlargement and ultimate victory. In reference to this, it is declared, “The Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with Thee.” It is His coming in majesty and power for the church’s completed salvation, accompanied by hosts of holy angels and multitudes of ransomed saints. In the destruction of enemies, and the establishment of His church and kingdom, His saints and holy angels joyfully concur, and give utterance to their loudest and most emphatic praise. Then, as exhibiting the character of the mixed dispensation of light and shade—seasons of depression and sorrow, and of enlargement and joy—both to the church and to individual believers, that precede the glorious appearance of the Saviour and the universal establishment of His kingdom, it is declared, “*It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night.*” And then, declaring by way of contrast, the passing away of clouds and darkness, the fulness of knowledge, and the perfection of holiness and joy which succeed, it is predicted—“*It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.*”

Imploring the guidance of the Spirit of light and truth, we shall consider—

I. THIS DAY AND ITS MIXED CHARACTER.

Our venerable translators show, by the various marginal readings and the supplements, that there is felt difficulty and obscurity in rendering the original words. The epithet *clear* is plural, and means *precious*, and *dark* denotes what is *condensed*, as *thick mist*, under which day is hardly distinguishable from night. The declaration may

be literally given, "There shall not be the light of the precious orbs, but condensed darkness." But connecting the words with what immediately follows—"one day," "not day nor night," and with the full "light" at the close—our version gives substantially the meaning of the prophetic description. During the whole period, till the time of the end, there shall not be altogether light, nor altogether darkness, but an intermediate condition, in which knowledge is imperfect, distresses and deliverances alternate, and sorrows are mingled with joys. The full light of knowledge and purity and happiness is reserved for the evening time, when the shadows disappear, and the dark night is succeeded by the brightness of perfect and eternal day.

1. Light and darkness are here used figuratively, and their intermixture is *characteristic of the new dispensation*. The representation may refer to its whole history, or to some particular periods. Light is the chosen emblem of knowledge and truth, of purity, comfort, and happiness; darkness, which is the absence of light, is expressive of ignorance and superstition, of idolatry, ruin, and public calamities. Hence it indicates, on the one hand, a condition disconsolate and miserable; yet, on the other, one enlightened by truth and joyful. Such is, to some extent, the character of the whole Gospel economy. At its introduction, the dark night parted, and "the day-spring" from on high began to dawn. The Sun of righteousness arose with salvation under his wings; the dense night of error and idolatry, with the obscurity of type and shadow, passed away, not again to return. Yet the dispensation was not throughout clear bright day. The light of Divine truth shone upon the world, scattering the mists of ignorance and error, and imparting the knowledge of salvation; but there were clouds remaining that intercepted its beams and obscured its radiance. It was not wholly dark, as if the sun had set or become eclipsed. During the Gospel day there has been commingled light and darkness.

Periods of bright radiance and prevailing knowledge and joy have been succeeded by others of decay and obscurity. Thus it has been in the past, and thus may it be expected yet to be, until at evening time the clouds that mar the view and enshroud the mind shall be chased away, and the dispensation shall close in mellow splendour.

2. This, again, is an exhibition of *the state of the Christian church under the new economy*. This is comparatively an era of light to the church. During the dispensation of types and legal ordinances, the church was under the moon and dim starlight. The types of the law were a "veiled Gospel," and prophets and saints of old saw "through a glass darkly" the glory to be revealed. They had the "shadow of good things to come," but "the substance was Christ." Jesus, the Saviour promised, was, in His incarnation, "the bright and morning star." He was revealed as "the Sun of righteousness," "the light of the world," the "true and only light" that "lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." In His mediatorial undertaking completed, the Gospel of peace proclaimed, and His Spirit poured out, He has been manifested "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the salvation of His people Israel." Respecting the person and work of Christ, and the church which He founded, it could be declared in the fullest sense, "*The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*" But soon the light which shone out so clearly in the opening of the dispensation was obscured. The last of the Apostles had scarcely been called away from the scene of earthly labours, till error and heresy began to spread throughout the church. The light of revealed truth was intermingled with fancies of men, and the speculations of a vain philosophy, and the purity of Divine ordinances was corrupted by human inventions. The writings of the early Christian fathers, abounding in puerile legends and vain conceits, bear marked evidence to the perfection of Divine revelation, when compared with the dictates of mere human intellect;

and show how soon and how greatly the doctrines and practical precepts of the Gospel became obscured and perverted, when the commandments of men are brought in to supersede the authentic teachings of the Spirit. Throughout lengthened periods in the history of the primitive Christian church, light is seen struggling with darkness. At times there were brief and bright eras of the radiance of truth breaking forth, and the church appears "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;" and, again, there was lengthened obscurity, as if the light of truth and holiness had become extinct, and the dark night of error and superstition was about to close in upon the church. The "*obscure age*," as it is termed, of the ninth and tenth centuries, was succeeded by the denser darkness of mediæval times, when Gospel truth was hidden by the vain janglings of the schoolmen, and the subtle refinings of the scholastic philosophy. The nations of Christendom were involved in ignorance and crime; and the church itself, fallen and corrupt, was unable to accomplish its heavenly mission to enlighten them that sat in the region of the shadow of death. Though God left not Himself without a witness, and there were some lights—rare and scattered—seen at intervals shining amid the general corruption, and guiding men into the way of peace, yet error, superstition, and idolatry were widely extended, and the gloom became thicker and more oppressive. The "veil of the covering was spread over all nations," and a funeral pall rested on the fortunes of the church. The bright light that burst forth at the era of the Reformation, and rapidly spread over many lands, became speedily weakened. Anti-Christian error and superstition resumed their sway over countries that had welcomed evangelical truth; and other European states that refused the Reformation, in the righteous judgment of heaven, were given over to blindness of mind and strong delusion, that have weighed them down and oppressed them throughout many generations. In some

Protestant lands the light of the Gospel has gone out; while, in the larger number, the church, corrupted by alliance with worldly states, or rendered inefficient by adopting worldly principles of policy, and acting in a worldly spirit, has exhibited but a feeble and sickle light, and has wholly failed in its mission to purify and bless the nations. In even the best cases of a Scriptural profession, and of the pure dispensation of ordinances, the lives of the members of the church so little adorn the doctrine of God the Saviour, that few are led, by seeing their good works, to glorify the Father in heaven. There is still the light of Divine truth which the church holds forth, and there are Christians who shine as lights in the world; but the light in neither case is so spreading as to penetrate the surrounding gloom, and to illumine multitudes immersed in ignorance and sin. Thus will it be, more or less, till towards the close of the dispensation, when the true light will be universally diffused, and will shine forth with convincing power; and when Christians themselves, illumined as "the light of the world," will "arise and shine, because their light has come, and the glory of the Lord has arisen upon them."

3. It represents the *state of the testimony of Christ in the hands of His servants*. A testimony in behalf of precious truths that are opposed and denied is of great value; and those have ever been the most honoured servants of Christ who have clearly understood and faithfully maintained it. It is like an "illuminated standard" borne by an embattled host—a "banner" entrusted to the soldiers of the cross to display because of truth. The two apocalyptic witnesses are the "two sons of oil," and the "two torch-bearers," "that stand before the God of the earth." (Rev. xi. 3.) They hold forth the lamp of the Gospel in the night of error and superstition, to deliver men from the thralldom of ignorance and sin, and to make known to them the way of life and salvation. During the whole period of their testimony-bearing—the 1260 prophetic

days—"the time, times, and a half"—they diffused the pure light of the word; and, connected with their labours, there are seen rays from heaven commingled with the surrounding darkness, revealing its disastrous nature, and delivering men from its enslaving power. The testimony of the early Christian witnesses in behalf of fundamental truths, after the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, was soon obscured; and, as error and corruption spread, but few were found to contend faithfully for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. The testimony borne in the fourth and fifth centuries in behalf of the Divine personality of the Saviour, proclaimed Him to be "Light of lights," and "very God of very God." For a brief period this was conspicuously displayed, and appeared to be generally embraced and to triumph. Again it was impugned and denied, and those who maintained it were exposed to persecution and death. The exclamation, "The whole world against Athanasius," showed how extensive was the apostasy from truth, and how much a faithful testimony was contemned and despised. The Paulikians in the East, and the Waldenses in the West, true to their ancient motto—"Lux in tenebris," held aloft the torch of truth, and carried it for ages through many lands. Their devoted lives illustrated the power and purifying influence of the truth, as their martyr-deaths confirmed the testimony which they held, and commended it to others. The reformers of the sixteenth century displayed a Scriptural testimony against numerous anti-christian errors, and in behalf of the way of the sinner's pardon and acceptance. At a later period, the witnesses for the Covenanted Reformation in Britain exhibited the fullest testimony in favour of the royal Headship of Christ, the supreme authority of the word, the spiritual independence of the church, and human rights, that the world has ever seen. Soon after the bright era of the Reformation and the Covenanting times, the testimony borne to those grand principles became less pointed and definite. And

since the Revolution down to the present times, there is but partial light throughout the British churches on some of the great articles of a Scriptural testimony. The glory of "Christ's crown and covenant" is not seen by ministers and people. The rights of Messiah, the Prince, are lost sight of in the fond admiration of worldly power. The sovereign claims of the Divine word, as the statute-book of heaven, are set aside by human legislation; and the Scriptural indopendence of the church, and the rights of man, are sacrificed to the maxims of carnal expediency. Some have eyes that are dim and cannot see afar off; and the glare of present interests and worldly things obscure and shut out the splendour of the crown and sceptre of Christ—the Prince of the kings of the earth—and the future glory of His kingdom of power. We behold not now our signs, and there is not among us a prophet who "knows the time how long." It is "the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be delivered out of it." There is reason to fear that this darkness will for a season increase. Prior to the time of the last conflict between truth and error, and the *slaying of the witnesses*, the voice of a faithful testimony will become less distinct throughout Christendom. Yet will there always be a few found ready to testify for precious truth, and to suffer for its vindication. In the future, as in the past, it will be neither wholly dark, nor bright; but at the close the darkness shall vanish, and the cause of truth and righteousness, for which martyrs contended unto blood, will universally triumph.

4. The *spiritual condition of believers* in the world is thus aptly exhibited. It is not clear nor dark, but it is one day with the Lord. Through converting grace, sinners are rescued from the power of darkness, and brought into God's "marvellous light." By the internal illumination of the Spirit, they become "children of the light and of the day," and are no longer of the night and of darkness. Yet the saving knowledge imparted to them is but partial and

imperfect. At first, the light given is but the dimness of the dawn. Then is given them "the Morning star," to assure them that the dark night of ignorance and sin has parted, not again to return, and as the harbinger of the risen day; but they are yet far from meridian brightness. Their *objective* light, though true, is in a great measure faint. They have but imperfect views of the mysteries of salvation. They "see through a glass darkly." Of the person of the Saviour—the grand central light—they see but His "back parts." Their "Beloved standeth behind our wall, looking forth at the windows, showing Himself," in speedily passing glimpses, "through the lattices." (Song ii. 9.) The *subjective* light, too, of believers, while here, is often obscure. Clouds and darkness surround the throne. The Lord hides His countenance, and His people are troubled. Through manifold temptations—from obscurity of the evidences of sonship and prevailing doubts and fears—the believer is not unfrequently a "child of light walking in darkness." Yet is he not wholly forsaken. The rainbow of promise surrounding the throne spans the darkest cloud. The light of the Word never goes fully out, and the illumination of the Spirit is not altogether withdrawn. The night is spending, and is "far spent." To them that wait for God, and watch as for the light of the morning, the day of gladness approaches. The shadows flee away apace. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." The star of hope often shines brightest in the most opaque firmament, and when the earth below is wrapt in the thickest gloom. Like the good John Brown of Haddington, the discouraged believer can say, "In my greatest downcastings, I was uphold by the assurance that 'I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.'"

Lastly—The Mediator's *providence towards His church and people* is of this mixed character—the interchange of

light and darkness. It is intricate and inscrutable—a “wheel within a wheel,” revolving around the church of the redeemed, as the centre of all the movement. Yet the wheels are full of eyes, directed by the highest intelligence; and “One like the Son of Man sits on the throne” above the wheels, controlling the whole dispensation by sovereign authority and resistless power. The seven-sealed book is in the hands of the Lamb slain, and the Lion of Judah’s tribe. The seals in succession He discloses, and sheds the light of His glory on every dark page. The acts of providential rule are to the saints at times obscure and perplexed; yet are they not wholly dark. Like the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire to Israel as they left Egypt and marched through the desert, they present a dark and bright side. They are a guiding and protecting light for the night, and a refreshing shade in the day. God is the Lord, who shows His people light, so that they can say in the confidence of faith and anticipation of hope. “The Lord is my light and salvation; who shall make me dismayed?” “When I walk in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me.” (Ps. xxvii. 1; Micah vii. 7.) Though God’s way is in the deep, and none hath sufficient knowledge thereof, yet His method of concealment is designed for the brighter display of His own glory, and for His people’s ultimate benefit and blessing. His special providence towards them is the dispensation of a covenant of sovereign love. It is *all-wise* and *gracious*, and most *condescending*. The issues are ever most beneficent and blessed. The redeemed are conducted all along in “a way that is right,” to bring them to “a city of habitation.” “All things,” even now, “are working together for their good.” The assurance is all-sustaining—“What ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter.” “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.” (Isa. xlv. 13.)

II. THE COMFORT AND BLESSING.

Under this mixed dispensation, and amid the trials that assail the children of God from imperfect discoveries, and in seasons of affliction and sorrow, there is abundant provision made for relieving their distress, and for imparting to them strong consolation. This is concisely and emphatically declared in the pregnant expression, "*But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord.*" The statement is replete with support to the believer under trouble, and of comfort and hope to the church in seasons of depression and suffering. It implies—

1. That the time of imperfect light and of trial *is a defined and brief period.* Seasons of depression and trouble, however lengthened they appear to some, are short and evanescent when viewed either in relation to God's purpose, or to the period of enlargement and blessing by which they are to be succeeded. According to the Divine reckoning, a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. To relieve the distress of the faithful, and to lift their minds above the gloom that broods over the fortunes of the church in the prospect of lengthened afflictions to come, the shorter measures of time are employed in Scripture to mark the period of darkness and sorrow. The whole time of Antichrist's reign, when the two witnesses testify in sackcloth, is 1260 *days*; the many years of trouble thus in the Divine calendar little exceeding a single day, while the whole dispensation is only comparable to two or three days. The prophetic times, marking the power of the church's enemies—the seasons of Divine displeasure and rebuke, and of consequent suffering—are represented as brief and speedily passing, while the appointed time of favour is long and over-enduring. The former are numbered by days, or by forty-two months, or for "a time, times, and a half." "For a small moment I have forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face for a

moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer." (Isa. liv. 7, 8.)* The Divine wrath, displayed in spiritual withdrawals and chastisements, lasts but a moment, and weeping is but for a night; in the morning joy arises, to last throughout a day of brightness and privilege. The comfort expressed by *Athanasius*, an honoured confessor, when bearing with the church affliction, and exposed to persecution, he said—" *These little clouds will soon pass over,*" is for the church and for suffering saints still. The time of trial is limited and distinctly marked in the Divine decree. The consolation spoken to the disciples, when sorrow had filled their hearts because of the Saviour's departure, is the same that is still spoken to believers to comfort them in sorrow, and cheer them with the hope of future glory. "A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." "Ye shall weep and lament: but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John xvi. 16, 22.) When afflictions shall have served their predestined purpose, the darkness will be completely dispelled, the shadows shall vanish, the bright day-break will come, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

2. It proclaims *the harmony of events in the Divine government*. The intermingling of light and shade in natural objects serves for beauty and pleasure. In a finished picture, the dark shade is a foil to give fuller expression to fair features and a lovely scenery. Clouds in the atmosphere show more vividly the azure clearness of the firmament; and the twilight is the sweet contrast to the splendour of the day, as it mitigates the gloom of night.

* The original term, rendered "a small moment," is singularly expressive of shortness of time, corresponding to the word in the German version, *augenblicke*, the rapid winking of the eye when exposed suddenly to a bright and dazzling object.

The same analogy appears in all the dispensations, whether of grace or providence, towards the church of the redeemed. The wheels that indicate the movements of providence, though intricate and lifted up to heaven, are addressed as one—"O Wheel!" It is one fixed, unchangeable purpose carried out to effect one gracious design. As the day has a twofold twilight, one bringing in the light, and the other introducing the darkness of night; and the period of day is diversified with cloud and sunshine, and the interchange of day and night serves the most beneficent purpose, so is the believer's and the church's time on earth. Seasons of affliction tend to test principle, purify the heart and life, and fit for enlarged usefulness and blessing. The church, rescued from error, and refined in the furnace of trial, is prepared to "offer an offering to the Lord in righteousness." Dark providences are succeeded by seasons of brightness and triumph. Zion puts on her "beautiful garments," and appears "the joy of the earth." Believers are brought to know that the sharpest trials and most severe and lengthened afflictions were necessary for them, to draw forth and strengthen their graces, wean them from the world, and train them to more devoted labour, and make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. When they have passed through dark scenes of trouble, the character shines forth in renewed lustre; and their joys, from contrast with former sorrows, are enhanced and full. They are made glad, according to the days wherein they were afflicted, and the years wherein they had seen evil.

This one day with the Lord shall not be interrupted or succeeded by night. The light of completed revelation can never become extinct; the lamp of the Gospel, though carried from land to land, and obscured at times in some places, shall continue to shine till it irradiates the world. There shall be no new dispensation, and another Gospel for the world's conversion shall never be proclaimed. When the great world-powers in succession shall have been subverted,

there shall be set up no fifth earthly monarchy; but the kingdom of Christ will be "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. vii. 14.) It may be that nations civilized shall decline, and, through cruel wars, barbarous customs, and debasing vices, become sunk and degraded. It is possible that through the prevalence of false science and philosophy, and through love of sensuous rites, men in large numbers may return to a pagan religion, and may adopt an anti-christian ritual. Yet are we forbidden to speak despondingly of the progress of Christianity. Ours is a peculiar epoch. The day is one with the Lord, never to be totally eclipsed, destined to continue to the end, and to shine more and more to final perfection.

4. The whole ordering of the times is in *sovereign wisdom and love*. The one day is "*known to the Lord*." The foundation of the building of mercy, which "stands sure," has this seal—"The Lord knoweth them that are His." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) He is intimately acquainted with all their conditions, afflictions, and trials, as He unceasingly cares for them. "The Lord knoweth the ways of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever." (Ps. xxxvii. 18.) He knows perfectly His own purposes towards them. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give an expected end." (Jer. xxix. 11.) The appointed times of restitution and enlargement are not for us fully to know, but Jehovah has them in His own power. They are now hidden, as to the date of their occurrence and the circumstances of their issues. Discoveries and deliverances, eagerly desired, are deferred. Events that are joy-inspiring will not be in our day, but are reserved for future generations. Enough for us that all is arranged in sovereign wisdom and infinite love; and we are assured that the vision is for a time appointed, and that to them who wait for its disclosure, "it will speak and not lie; it will come, and not tarry." His "counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

As the believer rejoices that his times are wholly in God's hands, He may exclaim in wrapt praise and adoration, "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." (Isa. xxv. 1.)

5. Jehovah watches over this day *with unceasing interest*. Not a moment of our existence falls out of His reckoning. No event, however minute or apparently trivial, is beneath His notice, or independent of His control. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father. The very hairs of your head are all numbered." He knows the end from the beginning. All is provided for and arranged in unerring wisdom, so as to contribute to the accomplishment of His fixed purpose. In the unfoldings of His providential administration, He will, without fail, effect His designed end in His own time. When the prophet, seeking to know more clearly the future respecting the church and the nations, earnestly inquired, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" the Divine answer pointed at once to present duty, and to the sure reward of faithful service. "Go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. xii. 8-13.) Whatever darkness there may be to us concerning God's purpose and providential movements, there is no confusion or uncertainty in the moral government of the universe. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." (2 Chron. xvi. 9.) Around His saints there is gracious watchful care continually. They walk before Him, and His eyes are ever upon them for good. The outgoings of the morn and evening are made to them to rejoice. The Keeper of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps; and with more than common providence He appoints all their goings. He keeps them as the apple of His eye, and covers them under the shadow of His wings. His eyes and His heart are upon Zion continually. The church can never be

forgotten or forsaken, for her exalted Head declares, "I have engraven thee on the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before Me." (Isa. xlix. 16.) Thus great is the comfort and full is the blessing of the assurance that the whole season of privilege and trial to the church is "one day," which shall be specially "known to the Lord"—revealing His glorious design of mercy and love, and fraught with the highest blessings to the hoire of salvation.

III. THE JOYFUL END AND ISSUE.

This is emphatically and comprehensively declared, "And it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." The season referred to is the close of this changeful day. Of the character of a joyful promise, it declares a condition wholly different from the natural evening twilight. Instead of receding light and approaching darkness, indicating the setting in of a night of silence and repose, the scene suddenly brightens—the light spreads with speed on every side, till it prevails over the darkness. There is the clear light of meridian splendour, no longer to wane or be eclipsed, but to shine with undiminished lustre throughout unnumbered ages.

This light at eventide is seen in the church freed from *error and corruption*, and *her light greatly increased*. The future state of the church on earth will be the reverse of the future of earthly kingdoms. These often rise from obscure beginnings, and advance to the meridian of power and prosperity; and they then decline till their power and glory pass away, and they sink into ruin. The church, on the contrary, is under the law of perpetual diffusion and increase. Her brightest period, the season when her internal light is most powerful and attractive, and her outward influence and prosperity is greatest, is the last. Then out of Zion, "the perfection of beauty," God shall shine. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Ps.

l. 2; Hab. ii. 14; Isa. xi. 9.) Everywhere men shall "walk in the light of the Lord," and "all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest."

This shall be in the era of the blessed *Millennium*—speedily approaching, for which there has been extensive preparation, and of its coming there are many distinct indications. This is ever presented to the hopes of the church as a period of greatly-increased *spiritual knowledge*, and to nations as a time of refreshing and of the restitution of all things. All power and authority opposed to Messiah's dominion shall be subverted and removed. "The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." (Isa. xxx. 26.) Above all former times of revival, the light of scriptural knowledge and holiness and spiritual joy shall be wide-spread and powerful. The *evening time* is the season of rest from labour, and of peaceful repose. So at the Millennium trouble shall cease, violence and destruction shall be no more in the church's borders, and none shall be found to hurt or annoy in God's holy mountain. It will be an era of harmony, tranquillity, and pleasurable rest. The darkness of anti-christian error and superstition, of Mahomedan delusion and oppression, and of pagan idolatry, shall be completely and for ever expelled. The church of the First-Born, united and triumphant, shall appear in attractive lustre: "That great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Rev. xxi. 10, 11.)

The eventide light shall be through *the universal diffusion of the word and the power of the Spirit*. Divine saving light emanates exclusively from supernatural revelation, and this becomes effectual for man's conversion and spiritual illumination by the agency of the Spirit. We cannot

doubt that in coming ages there will be a vast increase and wide diffusion of true and valuable knowledge—scientific, social, and political. The human mind, emancipated from the numerous fetters that long bound it, will have its powers greatly expanded, and new and wonderful discoveries in every field of investigation will reward earnest and persevering researches. “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” But chiefly the light of Divine truth, making known God and the way of human salvation, purifying men’s heart and conscience, and showing their responsibility and future destiny, shall beam forth with steady and increasing lustre. For effecting this blessed end, there is a marked and wonderful preparation in our day—the prelude of a glorious future. The Bible is being translated into every language, and is in rapid diffusion throughout all nations. Ere long all people and races shall be able to read in their own language the wonderful works of God. Everything going on in the world—the discoveries of science, the results of criticism, and ethnographical researches—tend to confirm the dictates of revelation, and to shed new light upon its testimony. We have all reason to expect that the utterances of the sacred oracles on many subjects will be more readily perceived and more fully understood than they are at present, and that their authority will be more universally acknowledged. Especially in the last promised abundant effusion of the Spirit, the moral and spiritual light proceeding from the Scriptures will be experienced with sanctifying and transforming power. Human minds will be enlightened and elevated; the conscience, purged from dead works, will bear witness for God and His claims, and the life will exhibit the beauty of holiness. The light of Divine truth shall irradiate the family relations; the voice of joy and melody shall be heard in the dwellings of the righteous; civil society, purified in its fountains, shall send forth everywhere refreshing streams; and nations, illumined by the word, and owning subjection to the Mediator, shall

bring their glory and riches to Zion. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.)

Again—The believer's *personal evidences are cleared* at the evening time, and his *holiness and comfort* perfected. At the close of life the changes and troubles of the pilgrimage come to an end. The darkness that at times surrounded the throne of providence is dispelled, and the clouds of sin and temptation that enshrouded the mind are scattered. The Lord lifts up His countenance upon His servants, the Spirit imparts peace in believing, and restores the joys of salvation. The lengthened period of warfare is succeeded by rest, and the near prospect of final victory. The night of weeping is come to an end, and, as the morning breaks, sorrow and sighing flee away, and everlasting joy, like a garland of glory, shines on the head.

The light at eventide springs from *gracious discoveries of the covenant* and from the *presence of Christ*. The "secret of the Lord" is revealed to the heart of His saints, and He "shows them His covenant." It is the discovery of the riches of the grace and love of the covenant. They rely on its righteousness for pardon and acceptance; its promises, exceeding great and precious, are all fulfilled to them, and its inexhaustible stores furnish an ample supply of all their wants. In the confidence of faith, and the full assurance of hope, the dying believer declares, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and this is all my salvation and all my desire." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) The gracious presence of the Captain of salvation is guaranteed for the closing scene. As the ark of the covenant going before Israel parted the overflowing Jordan, and opened a safe and easy entrance into the land of promise, so the Saviour, who conquered

death, comes at last to fulfil His word—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." "I will come and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (Isa. xliii. 2; John xiv. 3.) The coming glory sheds its beams over the scene of dissolution, and elevates the spirit with the near prospect of the bliss of heaven. As the light of eternity begins to irradiate the valley of the shadow of death, and the earnest of glory are given, the believer desires to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Like the proto-martyr Stephen, he is enabled to say, in full trust and confidence, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Reflecting with resignation and pleasure upon the past, and anticipating with delight the bright future, He can testify, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day: and not to me only, but likewise to all such as love His appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) Like *Rutherford*, when he came to the evening of a chequered life of arduous work and high privilege and manifold trials, he can exclaim, as the visions of bliss burst upon the dying scene—"There is glory, glory in Immanuel's land." Or, as a youthful minister, whose sun went down at noon, when the clouds that enveloped the mind in the first stages of affliction began to part, recently said at death, "I am moving into light," so the dying believer is filled and cheered by a blessed and joy-inspiring hope. The calm and mellow splendour of the sun setting without clouds gilds the closing earthly scene, and the light of the peaceful evening of life ushers in the unspeakable glories of eternity. Who would not joy in the assurance that, when the end comes of the day of labour and trial, of light and shade, of commingled joy and sorrow, at the eventide, there shall be perfect, soul-satisfying, everlasting light?"

IN CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, we note some PRACTICAL LESSONS, suggested by the representation and assurance contained in the text. These are diversified and all-important. A few only can be selected for a brief and cursory notice.

1. We have here a *sure test of Christian character*. The believer's state here is that of one who has been rescued from the power of darkness, and has passed out of the night of wrath and sin into the light of the risen day. "Ye are not the children of the night, or of darkness; but are children of the light, and of the day." The rays of Divine truth have illumined the mind once dark and blinded; the light of heavenly love has irradiated and enlarged the heart. Though the discoveries made to the soul are yet but imperfect—like the feeble morning dawn compared with the full day—they are real and increasing. All to whom they are made see sin and God and salvation through the medium of unerring truth. The things of time appear insignificant and vain compared with the vast interests of the soul and eternity. "Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high has visited us." The morning star of hope has arisen in our hearts, and henceforward our life-course is "the path of the just, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) While we bless God for Divine revelation, and rejoice in the marvellous light of the Gospel, it behoves us often to make searching inquiry whether we have been indeed delivered from the ignorance of error and the darkness of sin, and have come to the light of the living. Imperfect as yet are our views, and partial as is our knowledge, we should be able to declare, "Whereas I was once blind, now I see." We should know "the one day" of saving discovery, of privilege and hope, that is "known to the Lord," and should rejoice that the darkness of nature is for ever past, and that "the true light now shineth."

2. Our grand duty is *to walk in the light, seeking continually its increase and diffusion.* The possession of spiritual privilege furnishes an obligation to devoted service. Walking implies activity and progress, to which we are impelled by all that has been conferred upon us by the Gospel. The discoveries of Divine truth imparted, the glory of the covenant revealed, the saving enlightening work of the Spirit—all call us, as recipients, to shine as reflectors of light in the world. Even when made sensible that while we are not all unbroken darkness, yet there is within much remaining ignorance, mingled with some knowledge of Divine mysteries, and that suffering and sadness enter into our joys, our duty is to follow in the path where the light leads, and to reflect, for the benefit of others, the light of which we have been made partakers. We are required, “renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty,” to “commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Gospel sincerity, the girdle of truth, like the pure, penetrating sunbeam, shedding brightness on our own path, attracts and encourages others to run in the way of godliness. Our Lord’s impressive command to all His servants is, “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” (John xii. 35, 36.) This is the appointed way of reaching higher attainments, and of realising enlarged discoveries and the joys of salvation. Thus the clouds that settle down on the mind are often dispelled, and our evidences become clearer. We shall certainly come to have more light, if we walk in that which we have, and improve it by guiding into the way of peace and comfort those who are in darkness. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning.” (Hosea vi. 3.) “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. xii. 2.) A life of active

devotedness will generally be found associated with abounding joy and peace in believing; and reflecting on it at the close will often shed light around at eventide.

3. We should take the comfort of regarding one day, *alike of privilege and trial*, with all its alternations, as *one day with the Lord, and known to Him*. He "whose is the day, and whose also is the night; He who prepared the light and the sun" (Ps. lxxiv. 16), knows His people with peculiar interest, and is acquainted with all their ways. His eyes are ever upon them for good, and with a pleasant countenance He beholds them. The term of their earthly existence—their allotted period of work and trial—is fixed in a determined and unchangeable purpose. He knows their difficulties, discouragements, and afflictions. He makes full and adequate provision for all their needs, imparts sure and all-sufficient help in their conflicts and weakness, and ever makes out for every faithful servant the precious assurance, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." (Deut. xxxii. 25.) He knows what mercies are reserved in store for them; and these He draws forth and confers in times and ways the most suitable. The believer's confidence and joy are that He is over the object of the loving care of His Elder Brother; that there is constantly evolving on his behalf a unique plan of infinite wisdom and truth, so that all needed communications for mind and body will be given in the best time, and that all things are constantly working together for his good. This is true of the whole church of God, equally as of every individual believer. The day of her eventful history is one known to the Lord, ordained by His wisdom and love for all her work and trials, and for her final establishment and triumph. The sufferings and persecutions of the church, not less than her light and privileges, are necessary, as a designed preparation for the ultimate victory of truth, and for the final establishment of the kingdom of Christ. When the church arises to shine because her light is come, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all

flesh shall see the salvation of God. When, after ages of conflict, of alternate defeat and victory, "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills; all nations shall flow into it." (Isa. ii. 2.) Rejoicing in the sovereign dominion and gracious care of the church's exalted Head, and the believer's Friend, we can gratefully praise Him for past deliverance, and joyfully anticipate still greater enlargement for the future. "God is the Lord, who hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." (Ps. cxviii. 27.) "For with Thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light." (Ps. xxxvi. 9.)

4. Our highest interest is to wait continually for *the promised light at eventide*. In infinite wisdom and love it is provided, and at the time appointed it will assuredly come. The church's efforts will yet be crowned with success, and her highest expectations fulfilled. She shall appear "the perfection of beauty," having the glory of God, and her light "most precious." Upon the church, in its last stage on earth, shall beam with unclouded and refulgent splendour the glorious Sun of righteousness, bringing salvation under His wings. To the believer, as he approaches the end of the world's pilgrimage, the light of truth, of holiness, and of comfort greatly increases. Dark providences, which long puzzled and distressed him, become clear. Deep mysteries are solved. The covenant in its boundless treasures are shown, and "the secret of the Lord" is communicated. The darkness of time things—the clouds of sin, temptation, and trouble—have passed away, not again to return. The calm, sombre evening of the present life is succeeded by the bright dawn of endless day. It is the glorious splendour of the heavenly state—the meridian brightness of perfect, intuitive, beatific knowledge, of complete holiness, and of triumphant, everlasting joy and felicity. TO GOD MOST HIGH, THE FATHER OF LIGHTS, BE ALL THE GLORY.

THE GIFT OF CHRIST IN REDEMPTION —ITS DESIGN AND EFFECTS.

TITUS ii. 14—"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

IN the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles there is no more beautiful and comprehensive passage than that contained in the few verses of this chapter from which is selected this text. In verse eleventh the Spirit speaks of the "grace of God"—His sovereign, gratuitous favour and mercy. God, the eternal Fountain from which it flows to the children of men, is the God of love, the Father of mercies, the God of peace and salvation. This grace is eternal, rich, free, all-powerful, and invariable in its actings, reigning as a mighty sovereign to subdue all that is opposed to it, and to accomplish effectually its beneficent purposes. This grace has "appeared, bringing salvation to all men."* There is unrestricted exhibition. It has been publicly manifested to the world, in the unspeakable gift of the Saviour, and in the full offer of life and salvation through Him. Its first saving manifestation is to give spiritual light, and to impart the knowledge of salvation to perishing men. The grace of God is an *effective teacher*. By the word and disciplinary chastisement it in-

* This rendering is to be preferred to that of the authorised version. So it is given by Beza—"Illuxit enim gratia illa Dei salutifera quibusvis hominibus;" and likewise by Calvin—"Salutaris omnibus"—"that bringeth salvation to all men." The idea seems to be, not that this grace has appeared to all men, but that such a grace has been manifested as is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world.

structs us to (1) what is to be forsaken and completely mortified, and (2) to what is to be positively and perpetually practised. We are taught by Divine grace, in such a way as no other teacher can instruct, to “deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts”—those strong desires which the men of the world cherish in relation to visible, material objects—the lusts of the mind, and of the flesh, and “the pride of life.” Grace, while it can never lead any one into these, does more than teach merely to abstain from them. It, besides, effectually teaches to “live *soberly, righteously, and godly* in this present world.” In relation to our own character and duties, we are taught to cultivate always self-restraint and habitual soundness and sobriety of mind. It ever obliges, moreover, to live “righteously,” in recognising fully the rights of fellow-men, and in discharging towards them all relative duties. And, finally, we are constrained by the grace of God to live “godly.” We are taught to live *with* God, *in* God, and *for* God—to make His glory the chief end of our being connected with the enjoyment of Him here and hereafter, as the support and solace and joy of our lives. This we are instructed by God’s grace to do in this “present world” of evil and apostacy, where the opposition is so great and the work is so difficult. Amidst its temptations and trials and conflicts, like our Master, we are to be not conformed to the world while in it—to remain undefiled amidst its manifold pollutions, and unappalled by its enmities, resisting its allurements, and mortifying its spirit—by faith to overcome it completely.

Then this grace is distinguished by the certain hope and joyful expectation of future bliss. As we live in the world soberly, righteously, and godly, we look, with constant, lively expectation, “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour.” This, the great object of hope, is termed “*blessed*,” as it confers happiness and makes blessed for ever. This felicity is only realised fully at the glorious manifestation

of the august Person on whom it rests—of “the great God, even our Saviour.” There is a twofold personal epiphany of the Saviour, to which the hope of His saints is directed, the one of grace, and the other of glory. While, by faith, as taught by grace, we see Him spiritually here, and behold his back parts, the brightness of a full-face manifestation is reserved for His second coming. Our great duty and highest interest consist in keeping this glorious appearance ever in view, and in earnestly desiring and preparing for it. This is frequently enjoined by the authority of the Saviour; and in the most vivid and expressive terms it is represented as characteristic of His accepted servants, who are destined to glory, honour, and immortality at His future glorious manifestation. They “look for and hasten to the day of the Lord.” They “love His appearing.” (2 Tim. iv. 8.) They “wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thess. i. 10.) Their most exalted privilege lies here; this is their highest comfort and joy. Their Saviour, the great God, will gloriously manifest Himself at His second coming for their benefit, to complete their salvation, and to receive them to Himself, to be with Him where He is in heaven. To enhance exceedingly the glory of this wondrous appearance, and to show the paramount claims of the Saviour to the love and devoted service of His people, there are presented in the text the great *end of His death*, and its certain and *blessed effects* upon all who are personally interested in it. It behoves us, in attending to the discussion of this theme, seriously to consider our own individual concern in the matter, and earnestly to seek that the Holy Spirit would perform in us His covenanted work, that He would come and glorify Christ, and take the things which are His, and show them unto us. We purpose to consider briefly—

I. The greatness and excellency of this gift.

II. Its immediate design and effect.

III. The character that is the result.

I. THE GREATNESS AND EXCELLENCY OF THIS GIFT.

1. In considering this precious gift, we are called to note, chiefly, the exalted *Person*. The opening word of the text, "Who," occupies a place of special emphasis, and is immediately connected with the closing words of the preceding verse, "the great God, even our Saviour." The central object of regard and admiration is a Divine Saviour, and it is the fact that such a one was given for our salvation that renders this gift so transcendently excellent. Everywhere throughout the apostolic writings the death of Christ is held forth in this commanding aspect. "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (Rom. xii. 32; Eph. v. 25; 1 John iv. 10.) In God giving His *proper Son**—His only-begotten Son—as a substitute for the guilty and a ransom for the lost, we behold the majesty and grace of the Divine sacrifice. It was a gift every way worthy of the Father—the Head in the covenant of redemption. Thus was there found an ample vindication of His violated law—a full and sufficient atonement for the sins of the redeemed. The dignity of the Saviour's person throws a blaze of light upon the nature of sin, displays the fulness of Divine mercy to the sinner, and sheds lustre on the whole character of the moral administration of God. The two natures in the one Person, who is this "unspeakable gift," exhibit its excellence above all other objects in the universe, and were indispensably necessary for completing the propitiation. He became man that He might be in a condition to obey and suffer. He was "God manifest in the flesh," that He might sustain the manhood from sinking under unparalleled sufferings, and give infinite worth and efficacy to His Surety undertaking.

* So the original words, for "His own Son," are best rendered.

2. The Saviour gave His **WHOLE SELF**, *the greatest and best gift for our redemption*. This He engaged to do when He became Surety, and accepted the conditions of the eternal covenant. He gave *Himself*, surpassing all objects, material and spiritual, in the universe, and He came into the world to bring into accomplishment His undertaking. Set up from everlasting, "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth; and His delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 31.) The voluntary character of the Saviour's Suretyship shows the greatness of His offering; and hence were its merit and acceptance. "Christ hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." (Eph. v. 2; John xvii. 19.) "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John x. 17, 18.) He who gave Himself for us is—what no type could fully prefigure—at once the Priest, the Victim, and the Altar. All that was needed for the perfection of His atonement, and for the eternal salvation of His people, is found in the gift of His love. The great High Priest of our profession is Jesus the Son of God. This Altar we have, of "which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle"—who cling to the shadow, instead of embracing the glorious Substance. By this one sacrifice, He has for ever put away sin.

3. He gave Himself to *sufferings and death of the severest kind*. The greatness of the gift is seen in the depth of His abasement. His engagement in the covenant was the stipulation that His soul should be made an offering for sin, and that, in order to redeem men from the curse, He should bear the penalty of the violated law. He came into the world to a life of suffering obedience; and during all His time on earth, as He was a sin-bearer, He carried the dread punishment of human transgression. His sufferings both of body and mind were intense, embittered, and

long-continued. He was tried from every quarter that an innocent being could suffer—from the concentrated enmity of the world, from the powers of darkness, from the wrath of heaven. The great Agent in the Saviour's sufferings was the Father, as a just, sin-avenging Judge. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief." He drew forth and commanded the sword of avenging justice to awake and "smite the Shepherd"—the Man that was His fellow. "The Captain of salvation" was made "perfect through sufferings," that He "might bring many sons unto glory;" and this was not only necessary, but becoming and well-pleasing to God. (Heb. ii. 10.) The suffering Saviour, as He endured such agony, and gave His life a ransom for many, could say of His unparalleled sufferings, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger." (Lam. i. 12.) How wonderful and transcendent is the gift for our redemption that was provided at the expense of a sacrifice so costly, that comes to us through afflictions so aggravated and immense!

4. All this obedience was presented in *our stead*; all these sufferings were endured for *our benefit*. He gave Himself *for us*, that He might redeem us from all iniquity. The greatness of the gift is enhanced not only from the dignity of the Giver, but from the consideration of *those on whom* it is bestowed. These were under the curse, poor, perishing, rebellious creatures. When "we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In due time He died for the *ungodly*. The original term employed to express this amazing devotion denotes "*over*," "*above*" us, meaning that He threw Himself above and over us, and received the infliction of avenging justice that was about to fall upon us. He assumed our place in law, and endured for us the punishment that we deserved, that we might be freed from the wrath to come. He suffered, "the Just One for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

(1 Pet. iii. 18.) What an astonishing gift! What amazing love and condescension is this! The great God and our Saviour suffered as the Substitute of fallen, rebellious, wretched creatures. The Sinless took the place of the sinning. The Creator of the world, clothed in our weakness and mortality, expiated the guilt of creatures condemned and loathsome. He voluntarily surrendered Himself to be judged and condemned—the Holy One of Israel to be treated as a sinner and an accursed malefactor. He was “numbered with the transgressors,” as He poured out His soul to the death. On our account He died the death of deaths; in our room and stead He “endured the cross, despising the shame;” and, to confer on us benefits innumerable and transcendently excellent, He underwent sufferings and endured agonies surpassing all the conception of intellects the most exalted.

5. This gift is for *each individual that is brought near to Him*. The love that originated human redemption was special, and contemplated its objects as individuals. Faith that embraces God's unspeakable gift acts in the way of personal appropriation: “He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.” (Gal. ii. 21.) Multitudes of the poor, the weak, and the miserable are called and justified and saved. In “the way of holiness,” the “wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err.” (Isa. xxxv. 8.) We are welcome, however unworthy and despised, to receive the gift freely offered. “Without money and without price” we may come and enjoy the great blessings of the covenant—the choicest fruits of Immanuel's land. Sensible of our need of this precious gift, and receiving it on the footing of the gracious offer, we may certainly say, “I know it—it is *for me*;” and, at the same time, inviting others to a full participation, we may declare—“It is for thee, too, my brother or sister;” and when all shall have partaken of the rich provision, it will ever remain undiminished and inexhaustible. How solemn and devout should be our thoughts if the great gift of a Saviour has become ours in

actual possession! With what love and affection will we behold one another, even the weakest and most unworthy, when we regard them interested in God's eternal love, and partakers of the gift of His Son! Saints on earth are thus esteemed "the excellent," in whom all the delights of fellow-saints are placed. They love one another in complacency, "with a pure heart fervently." And when in full chorus they sing "the new song," and in the immediate presence of the Lamb they exclaim, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood," each individual of the innumerable multitude will feel that the lofty ascription of praise is the expression of his own particular case. Rejoicing in common with all the ransomed that return to Zion, they wave individually their palms of victory, and declare for themselves with loud voice, "Salvation to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb." Thus, whether we consider the glorious person of the Saviour; the surrender of His whole self; the sufferings and death which He willingly endured; the substitutionary character of His undertaking and work; and the benefits which it ensures to every redeemed one, however lowly and unworthy, we can never cease to regard with profound wonder and astonishment the Saviour's gift of Himself for lost and perishing sinners.

II. THE IMMEDIATE DESIGN AND EFFECT OF THE GIFT.

The primary purpose of the grace of Christ is emphatically declared, when it is said, "*That He might redeem us from all iniquity.*" This is to us the most important effect of the Saviour's great love in suffering and dying, and of the Father's covenant-favour in the gift of His beloved Son. It was not merely to bring us to heaven at death, but to free us from guilt, and cleanse us from sin now. He gave Himself for the present certain and eternal redemption of those who were once fallen, condemned, and perishing.

For these He paid *the costly ransom*. Redemption

always involves the idea of restoration by means of an adequate ransom. This is ever represented as the object of Christ's suffering and death on behalf of His people—as the grand purpose effected by the shedding of His precious blood. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life for many.” (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45.) “Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.” (Rev. v. 9.) The price paid for our vast debt was given in “the coined gold of heaven”—the blood of Christ—and is most pure and precious. The ransom was life for life—the spotless life of the Lamb of God for our forfeited lives. The blood that “makes atonement” (Levit. xvii. 11) was freely shed on our behalf, to ransom us to God, and as the purchase-price of all our privileges. In Him “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

This includes deliverance from *the guilt, power, and all the consequences of sin*. For this the death of the Surety was intended, and this is its actual and certain effect. The Saviour did not die at random. He engaged in covenant with a fixed and definite aim, and by stipulations the most solemn and sacred;—through suffering unto death, the ends of His Suretyship were to be fulfilled. He came to redeem His people from the *curse* of the violated law, and for this purpose He “was made a curse” in their stead. Their sins, and the dread penalty of sin, were imputed to Him, and He was dealt with as a Substitute for transgressors. The handwriting of legal ordinances that was against them—the bond and judgment that insured condemnation—He took out of the way, having nailed them to His cross—never to be taken down, or again pleaded against them in judgment. (Col. ii. 14.) The death of Christ, as that of the Kinsman-Redeemer, is a sufficient and accepted ransom. Our vast debt has been fully paid, and the payment accepted; it can never be exacted a second time. Our guilt is for ever cancelled. “There is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus.” None may

lay a just charge against the elect. "It is God that justifies; it is Christ that died." Redemption includes, moreover, deliverance from "*the power of sin*." In dying, the Saviour, by an act of glorious power, rescued the prey from the mighty, and in His cross He triumphed over all enemies—His own and His people's—making a show of them openly. In applying His finished work, He overthrows the tyrant sin, and disannuls its power. He delivers from the dominion of darkness, and sets free for ever from the bondage of corruption. Sin may tempt, defile, and annoy, but it can never resume its lost sway. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, for he is born of God." (Rom. vi. 14; 1 John iii. 9.) From all the *consequences of sin*, in this world, at death and for ever, Christ has redeemed us. From all *lawlessness*,* and every transgression of the law—from evils affecting the body and outward estate—from doubts and fears perplexing the mind—from all that defiles the heart and conscience—and from disbelief and darkness and dread of punishment, Christ Jesus gave Himself that He might deliver us. Not alone from the penalty, but likewise from the remains and being of all iniquity, has He delivered us. In the fullest sense, He has put away every sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "He took away the iniquity of that land in one day." (Zech. iii. 8.)

Through the *power of His cross*, He frees from all iniquity. The firm ground of our deliverance was laid in the ransom paid in the death of Christ; and in the victory thus achieved over all the people's enemies, our actual freedom is through faith receiving the atonement. Christ's blood shed is a "fountain," full and inexhaustible, "opened for sin and uncleanness." As it is ever accessible, sinners, the most guilty and defiled, having recourse to it, wash all

* This is the proper rendering of the original term.

their stains away. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 25, 26.) By the word received through the power of the Spirit, and by the virtue of the cross, the dominion of sin is broken, and its defilement purged away. As water cleanses to the purifying of the flesh, so the blood of the cross, applied by the Spirit, cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. When Israel "kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood," so that the destroyer of the first-born in Egypt was without power to touch them. So we, abiding under the shelter of atoning blood all the night, and protected from all enemies, are made to rejoice in God's salvation. "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." (Exod. xii. 13.) Iniquity is lawlessness, injustice, and robbery of God, and wrong-doing to ourselves and others. From *all* iniquity, the ransom and power of Christ's cross delivered us. In the death of the Substitute, God found a complete ransom; and, in consequence, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.) Let faith apprehend a crucified Saviour, and appropriate the ransom paid and accepted, and we are "constrained" to live entirely to Him who died for us and rose again. We become crucified to the world, and the world unto us; and in holiness of heart and life we fulfil the grand purpose of His dying love. Christ is all and in all. In the expressive words of *Luther*, "He who has Christ, has all things, and He who has not Christ has nothing." The virtue of the cross is universal and perpetual. It is plainly impossible to be in love with the cross and with any sin at the same time. The man who cherishes sin in his heart, however secretly, or practises it in his life, is not delivered from all iniquity; whatever he thinks, he is

doing all he can to frustrate the designs of a dying Saviour. Our assured and joyful hope is that, in due time, the power of sin will be completely subdued, and its pollution purged away. The blood of Jesus has a present, potent, purifying efficacy. It now "cleanses from all sin." A little while and the last stain of moral impurity will disappear. Made snow-white by washing in the Lamb's blood, we shall be "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

The *brief sufferings* of the Redeemer, and *His life in glory*, are fully adequate to effect all this. How the obedience of Christ—either during His whole life on earth or in the few hours of His bloody agony in the garden and on Calvary—could redeem from all iniquity, and for ever put away sin, has been sometimes questioned. The consideration of His character and undertaking furnishes a satisfactory solution to the inquiry. The Sufferer was "God manifest in the flesh"—hence His obedience and sufferings were infinitely meritorious. The infliction of wrath laid upon the Surety, when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, was equal to an eternity of punishment. His blood shed was the price paid for the redeemed, and a full compensation for all spiritual and heavenly blessings, which were to be their everlasting inheritance. Again, in the sufferings of the Redeemer, regard was had to *covenant stipulation*. If an adequate payment could be made at once for man's offence in violating God's law, there was no need of lengthened suffering by the Surety. This the God-man did when he gave Himself a sacrifice in the room of the guilty. "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "For by one offering hath He perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. ix. 26; x. 14.) His atoning work, from the dignity of His person and the engagement of the covenant, has boundless merit, and may therefore be firmly relied upon for pardon and acceptance for all spiritual and eternal blessings. Thence the Mediator's work in heaven applies and perfects the

purchased redemption. We have life in a risen Saviour. By His coming in the flesh to suffer and to die, the *costly price* of our redemption was paid; by His work in heaven, and His coming in glory, our salvation is completed. Both are required to perfect the work of salvation, and "bring many sons to glory." The High Priest of our profession entered the holy place—not made with hands—by the blood of His atoning sacrifice. Ever living to intercede in heaven. He is able and ready "to save to the uttermost all that will come unto God by Him." (Heb. vii. 25.) Having by Himself purged our sins, He is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10.) There is thus, in the death of the Redeemer on earth, and in His life and perpetual work in glory, full, blessed provision made for the eternal redemption of all that were given Him in the covenant of them He came to seek and to save. "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (Ps. cxxx. 7, 8.)

III. THE CHARACTER THAT IS THE RESULT.

The design of the Saviour's death "for our sins"—the end and object of His redemptive work, are shown in the *permanent character* of the redeemed, and in *their* work and *the spirit* in which it is performed. He redeemed them, that "He might purify them to Himself for a peculiar people," and that they might be everywhere distinguished from others by being "zealous of good works." The first design concurs with the second lesson taught by the grace of God—to "live soberly, righteously, and godly" in the world. Christ died to *purify* His people as well as to *pardon* them. He saves by healing their nature. He makes holy in order to bring to heaven. The gracious effect of redemption by Christ's death is to make *more and*

more holy. They are purchased and called to be *saints*, separated, sanctified, and pious. Brought into a state of saintship, they are renewed in the spirit of their mind. Thus are they distinguished from the world lying in wickedness. The remains of corruption are purged away by the blood of Christ, and by the indwelling Spirit. For their sakes Christ—one with them and as their Head—“sanctified Himself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John xvii. 19.) This purification is by the word of truth, by the blood which it exhibits, and by the Spirit as the great Agent of application. It is *gradual, progressive, and always increasing.* The God of peace *sanctifies wholly*, in every part of the moral nature, and preserves the soul, body, and spirit blameless. All providential dispensations concur in promoting the sanctification of the redeemed. Afflictions are to them the “refiner’s fire” and “fuller’s soap,” by which the dross is taken away, and the stains in their garments are washed and blotted out. By fatherly chastisements and rebukes they become partakers of God’s holiness. The work is at length perfectly accomplished. “Refined, but not with silver,” and “chosen in the furnace of affliction,” they emerge out of great tribulation with robes washed and made snow-white in the blood of the Lamb.

As ransomed and sanctified, they are not their own, but *wholly His.* This is the import of the designation—“*a peculiar people.*” It denotes a valued and loved possession. As Israel at Sinai, when taken into covenant, became *Segullah Jehorah*—the treasure or inheritance of Jehovah (Exod. xix. 5), so those for whom Christ died are a “purchased possession.” (1 Pet. ii. 9.) He “purifies to Himself a people for a possession.”* They are His honour and glory—as the jewels of a prince’s crown, the royal treasure of His kingdom. It is not enough that they are “*acceptable*,” as some say,† or a “*new possession*,”‡ as

* Luther.

† Vulgate—*acceptabiles.*

‡ Syriac.

others—they are precious and honourable to Jehovah; esteemed “over and above all others.” They are over near to Him, dearly loved as the apple of His eye, and set as a signet upon His arm. As a church redeemed, called out, and separate, the name, honour, and glory of Christ are entrusted to them. They are to Him “a praise in the earth”—a people of inheritance, an everlasting possession.

They were designed to be *exhibited* as the Lord’s property, *belonging to Him alone*. Not only were they chosen and purchased to be a peculiar possession, but they are actually made “a chosen generation,” a “royal priesthood,” a “holy nation.” (1 Pet. ii. 9.) Called out of darkness into God’s “marvellous light, they show forth the praises of Him who hath called them,” and they “shine as lights in the world.” As Jehovah took Israel, and brought him forth out of the iron furnace in Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance (Deut. iv. 20), so the saints, distinguished by holy separation from the world lying in wickedness, are made known as the Lord’s people. (Exod. xxxiii. 16.) This is the special mark of being the Lord’s heritage—the clear token and evidence of His presence among them. They are called out of the world to bear God’s name, and to be for His glory in the earth. To them are entrusted the great concerns of His glory, and from them alone is the homage of a willing service, and all the revenue of honour which is rendered Him by the sons of men. “The Lord’s portion is His people, and Israel is the lot of His inheritance.” If we are redeemed to be to God His peculiar treasure, then are we ever required to reflect His glory before others, and to exhibit the excellency of our character and privileges, that we may bring honour to Him who hath called us.

They are brought under *peculiar obligations*, and are known by *peculiar dispositions*, as ransomed sinners. To be peculiar does not mean in the first instance to be *unlike* others in their manner of living; but separation from the world is certainly implied in their being claimed as God’s

people, and in their personal dedication to His service. They have given their "bodies a living sacrifice," non-conformed to the world, but "transformed according to the renewing of their minds." (Rom. xii. 2.) By the mind of Christ, which the Spirit infuses, they become pious, humble, and spiritual. Growing to likeness to Christ in all things, they are upright, meek, and prayerful. They feel continually the force of spiritual obligations. They come out and are separate, and are numbered in the family of God. They overcome the world by faith, and are peculiar in thoughts and words, in habits and pursuits, as their privileges form a peculiar inheritance, excelling in value and beauty. "The lines fall unto them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage." They have thoughts and feelings unknown to others; with their joys and sorrows a stranger does not intermeddle. Constrained by the love of Christ, they live not to themselves, but to Him who died and rose again. Living as strangers and pilgrims here, and having their "conversation"—their country in heaven, they seek a city to come, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Finally—They are redeemed from all iniquity, that they may be employed in *works of new obedience*, and that they may do them with a zeal that is pure, self-denying, and unflagging. The "good works" of which they are to be zealous are such as God enjoins; the fruits of a living faith, performed from a right principle, and directed to a good end;—they are those which bring glory to God, and are beneficial to men. Bought with a price, that we may be the servants of God, we delight in holy obedience, and gladly engage in every service to which we are called. "An opportunity to do good" is embraced as "an obligation to do good." It is our highest honour to resemble Him who, during His whole life on earth, went about doing good. These good works are works of piety in the church and of benevolence to men. Our duty and honour are always to be employed in God's work in the earth—to be

workers together with Him, as we are God's husbandry and building. The zeal by which the good works of the peculiar people are undertaken and performed is a holy fire enkindled in the heart by the Spirit of light and love. It is an eminent part of the mind of Christ, concentrating the thoughts, elevating and purifying the affections with the glow of "a live-coal from the altar," and constantly stimulating to devoted action. It exercises an exciting and powerfully assimilating influence upon others. Whether to self-denied labour or to large-hearted liberality, the zeal of true servants of Christ "*provokes very many*" to do likewise in working and benevolent giving. And even after they have rested from earthly labours, the influence of their spirit remains. Their good works, zealously performed, will make Christ's name to be remembered in future generations, and cause the people evermore to praise Him. This zeal, enkindled and sustained by the Spirit, has for its objects the honour of Christ, the spread and power of the truth, the purity and prosperity of the church, and the moral elevation and blessing of human society. It is directed against errors, idolatry, and all sin. It aims habitually to alleviate human misery, redress the wrongs of society, and, in love to mankind, to bless the nations of the earth. It is an all-controlling, absorbing, consuming emotion. Like the Saviour, whose meat and drink was to do the will of the Father, and to finish His work, every true devoted servant can say—"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (Ps. lxix. 9.) "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words." (Ps. cxix. 139.) As *Brainerd*, the self-denied apostolic missionary, his prevailing desire is, "Would that I were a flame of fire, continually burning and spreading itself, in love to my God and His service!" The doing of such works in this devoted zealous spirit is the clear evidence and sure result of being redeemed, purified, and made a peculiar people.

IN CONCLUSION.

How vast and weighty our obligations to *embrace, love, and glorify* this precious Saviour. Behold His matchless person, contemplate His unspeakable love, see Him giving Himself a Substitute for the lost and perishing—a sacrifice and whole burnt-offering to rescue sinners from going down to the pit, and to bring them to God. Angels continually desire to look into these things. How should we, the children of men, fallen, guilty, and polluted, who have a far deeper interest than angels in the redemption of Christ, behold them with profound wonder and astonishment! This blessed Saviour has all claims upon our confidence and supreme exclusive love. We owe Him everything, and He should be to us All in all. We should come now and receive Him as our best Beloved and Friend. We should centre all our affections upon Him; and the life which He has redeemed should be surrendered wholly to Him, to serve and honour Him, to spend and be spent entirely to promote His glory. An incident of the late American civil war will illustrate the fervent regard which we owe to Him who gave Himself for us, to save us from death. At the period of the worst part of the struggle, when the conscription was enforced in one of the Western States, the husband and father of a young family was placed on the draft. A young man in the neighbourhood, pitying his family in the prospect of their being deprived of his care, voluntarily offered to become his substitute. He went and was killed in battle. Some time after a traveller found the man who was first enrolled, after having travelled a long distance, sitting on the soldier's solitary grave, and weeping. When inquired the cause of his grief, he replied, with deep emotion, "*Oh! he died for me!*" How much greater should be our love and gratitude to that precious Saviour who gave Himself to die for us no common death, and who, by dying in our stead, rescued us from the pit of corruption, and procured

for us blessings better than life—even blessedness full and eternal! Consider the *extent and excellency of redemption* by the blood of Christ, and *our own personal interest* in it. If we are redeemed, we are rescued not merely from the curse and from hell, but also from the dominion and pollution of sin, and from all iniquity. We are *redeemed to God* to be His, to obey Him, to shine in the beauty of His moral likeness, and to enjoy His blessedness for ever. We should reflect with wonder and admiration on the worth and worthiness of the Redeemer, and appropriate Him as ours—the living and life-giving One. Consider the ransom—precious, complete, and accepted! It is the spotless life of the Redeemer given instead of lives that were guilty, defiled, and polluted. It is the purchase paid for our souls and bodies, and for all the benefits given us to enjoy. All temporal good things come to us as freed from the curse, and as new covenant gifts; and all spiritual blessings “in heavenly places in Christ” are the chief parts of the purchased possession. As “the ransomed of the Lord,” we should come to Zion “with singing” for deliverances wrought, for mercies received, and for prospects of greater blessings yet to be enjoyed. God’s redeemed should praise Him with bursting gratitude, because “His mercy endureth for ever;” for delivering them from the enemy’s hand, and for leading them in a way that is right, to bring them to a city of habitation. The chorus of our song should be, “O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His works of wonder to the sons of men.”

As a motive to holy living, we should reflect that the primary end of Christ’s death for His people was to “*purify them to Himself.*” Israel, ransomed from Egypt, had statutes and ordinances given them, that they might be separate from all pollution of idols, and consecrated to God. This was the end of the great work done for them, and of all the privileges conferred upon them. “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy

God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." (Deut. vii. 6.) Redemption through Christ supplies a greatly more powerful motive and obligation to seek conformity to Him who has called us. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. i. 15, 16.) God's holiness is the harmony and lustre of all His perfections; it is His beauty and transcendent glory. In it He is exhibited as the all-perfect Model, to which we should ever labour to be conformed. The Divine calling is the motive frequently urged to promote this conformity. "*The acts of the offspring should indicate likeness to the father.*"* This holiness is progressive—the object of fervent aspiration and constant pursuit. It is universal and permanent. The inward motives—the springs of action, are to be purified to God. The "conversation," or course of life, reflecting the internal principle, must likewise be purified. And this is to be shown in every part of the conduct. "Holiness in all manner of conversation." This is the clear and sure evidence of being redeemed—this our only meetness for the society and happiness of heaven. The command speaks to us with supreme authority—"Be ye holy; for I am holy." With *Me* above all you have to do. Ye are Mine. I am essentially holy—the Fountain of holiness; and ye are called to partake of My holiness, that ye may be like Me in moral excellency, and enjoy that felicity whose essence is holiness, perfect and eternal. We are holy only in as far as through the heavenly calling we are consecrated to God, and made like Him. With the command to be holy, God communicates the power to obey. The quickening, sanctifying Spirit reveals Christ to the heart, transforms after His likeness the whole nature, and conducts to heaven, where perfect purity, shining with full and un-

* Augustine.

clouded lustre, beams forth from all its blessed inhabitants for ever.

The grand evidence that we have felt *the power of the cross, and our meetness for the heavenly inheritance*, are shown in living here as a "peculiar people," "zealous" of all "good works." "*Every one who has this hope in him purifieth himself, as God is pure.*" "The righteous He has set apart for Himself." They are God's peculiar possession and treasure. They belong to Him alone. As they recognise His exclusive claims upon themselves and all they have, for Him they should ever be. They are "His workmanship, created anew unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) These they are required to "maintain at all times for necessary uses," to honour God and benefit men. In these they should be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding." Bought with the redemption-price, we are in no respect our own. We are servants of a glorious Master, engaged to serve Him with our whole heart and life—with holy, unflinching zeal to promote continually His glory in the earth. So shall we walk as He walked, reflecting His moral likeness; thus shall we share at last "the recompense of the reward." "Him that serveth Me, will My Father honour; and where I am, there shall My servant be." "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." (John xii. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 58.)

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